



# ROBERT BROWNING

B. P.

A



Robert Browning.

THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
ROBERT BROWNING  
WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS



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## PIPPA PASSES.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE  
TREVISAN. — *A large, mean, airy,  
chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the silk-  
mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY !

Faster and more fast,  
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;  
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim  
Where spurting and supprest it lay—  
For not a froth-flake touched the rim  
Of yonder gap in the solid gray  
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;  
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,  
Till the whole sunrise, not to be supprest,  
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast  
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then over-  
flowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,  
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,  
The least of thy gazes or glances,  
(Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts  
above measure)  
One of thy choices, or one of thy chances,  
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or freaks  
at thy pleasure)  
—My Day, if I squander such labour or  
leisure,  
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me !

Such stir about,—whom they expect from  
Rome

To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,  
And say here masses proper to release  
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt  
his peace?

Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts  
to ward

Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard!  
But Pippa—just one such mischance would  
spoil

Her day that lightens the next twelve-  
month's toil

At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil  
And here I let time slip for nought!

Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam—caught  
With a single splash from my ewer!

You that would mock the best pursuer  
Was my basin over-deep?

One splash of water ruins you asleep,  
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits

Wheeling and counterwheeling,  
Reeling, broken beyond healing—

Now grow together on the ceiling!  
That will task your wits!

Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see  
Morsel after morsel flee

As merrily, as giddily . . .

Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,  
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?  
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?

New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,  
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk  
bird's poll !

Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple  
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll  
Such turban-flowers ; I say, such lamps  
    disperse

Thick red flame through that dusk green  
    universe !

I am queen of thee, floweret ;  
And each fleshy blossom  
Preserve I not—(safer  
Than leaves that embower it,  
Or shells that embosom)  
—From weevil and chafer ?

Laugh through my pane, then ; solicit  
    the bee ;

Gibe him, be sure ; and, in midst of thy  
    glee,

Love thy queen, worship me !

—Worship whom else ? For am I not, this  
    day,

Whate'er I please ? What shall I please  
    to-day ?

My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend  
    my day ?

To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds  
    silk,

The whole year round, to earn just bread  
    and milk :

But, this one day, I have leave to go,  
And play out my fancy's fullest games ;  
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—  
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by  
the names  
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo !

See ! Up the Hill-side yonder, through the  
morning,  
Some one shall love me, as the world calls  
love :  
I am no less than Ottima, take warning !  
The gardens, and the great stone house  
above,  
And other house for shrubs, all glass in  
front,  
Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is  
wont,  
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes ;  
And therefore, till the shrub-house door  
uncloses,  
I . . . what, now ?—give abundant cause  
for prate  
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,  
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down  
The spitefullest of talkers in our town—  
How we talk in the little town below !  
But love, love, love—there's better love, I  
know !  
This foolish love was only day's first offer ;  
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :

For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally  
Out of Possagno church at noon?  
Their house looks over Orcana valley—  
Why should I not be the bride as soon  
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,  
Arrive last night that little bride—  
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash  
Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black  
bright tresses,  
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;  
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!  
—So strict was she, the veil  
Should cover close her pale  
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce  
touch,  
Scarce touch, remember, Jules!—for are  
not such  
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,  
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a  
creature?  
A soft and easy life these ladies lead!  
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed—  
    Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,  
    Keep that foot its lady primness,  
    Let those ankles never swerve  
    From their exquisite reserve,  
    Yet have to trip along the streets like me,  
    All but naked to the knee!  
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss  
    So startling as her real first infant kiss?  
    Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me  
Leave to take or to refuse,  
In earnest, do you think I'd choose  
That sort of new love to enslave me?  
Mine should have lapped me round from the  
beginning  
As little fear of losing it as winning!  
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their  
wives,  
And only parents' love can last our lives:  
At eve the son and mother, gentle pair,  
Commune inside our Turret; what prevents  
My being Luigi? while that mossy lair  
Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred  
With each to each imparting sweet intents  
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—  
(For I observe of late, the evening walk  
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends  
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,  
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than  
friends)  
Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,  
And schemed for, safe in love as with a  
charm;  
Let me be Luigi! . . . If I only knew  
What was my mother's face—my father,  
too!  
  
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all  
Is God's; then why not have God's love  
befall

Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,  
 Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the  
     home  
 Of his dead brother; and God will bless in  
     turn  
 That heart which beats, those eyes which  
     mildly burn  
 With love for all men: I, to-night at least,  
 Would be that holy and beloved priest!

Now wait!—even I already seem to share  
 In God's love: what does New-year's hymn  
     declare?

What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God:*  
*If now, as formerly He trod*  
*Paradise, His presence fills*  
*Our earth, each only as God wills*  
*Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,*  
*Are we; there is no last nor first.*  
*Say not “a small event!” Why “small”?*  
*Costs it more pain than this, ye call*  
*A “great event,” should come to pass,*  
*Than that? Untwine me from the mass*  
*Of deeds which make up life, one deed*  
*Power shall fall short in, or exceed!*

And more of it, and more of it!—oh, yes—  
 I will pass by, and see their happiness,  
 And envy none—being just as great, no  
     doubt,

Useful to men, and dear to God, as they !  
 A pretty thing to care about  
 So mightily, this single holiday !  
 But let the sun shine ! Wherefore repine ?  
 —With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,  
 Down the grass-path gray with dew,  
 Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,  
 Where the swallow never flew  
 As yet, nor cicale dared carouse—  
 Dared carouse !

[*She enters the street.*

### I.—MORNING.

*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.  
 LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour,  
 the German SEBALD.*

*Seb. (sings).*

*Let the watching lids wink !  
 Day's a-blaze with eyes, think—  
 Deep into the night, drink !*

*Otti.* Night ? Such may be your Rhine-land nights, perhaps ;  
 But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink,  
 —We call such light, the morning's : let us see !  
*Mind how you grope your way, though !*  
*How these tall*

Naked geraniums straggle ! Push the  
lattice—  
Behind that frame !—Nay, do I bid you ?—  
Sebald,  
It shakes the dust down on me ! Why, of  
course  
The slide-bolt catches.—Well, are you  
content,  
Or must I find you something else to spoil ?  
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald ! Is it full  
morning ?  
Oh, don't speak then !

*Seb.* Ay, thus it used to be !  
Ever your house was, I remember, shut  
Till mid-day—I observed that, as I strolled  
On mornings thro' the vale here : country  
girls  
Were noisy, washing garments in the  
brook—  
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the  
hills—  
But no, your house was mute, would ope no  
eye—  
And wisely—you were plotting one thing  
there,  
Nature, another outside : I looked up—  
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron  
bars,  
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light ;  
Oh, I remember !—and the peasants laughed

And said, "The old man sleeps with the  
young wife!"

This house was his, this chair, this window  
—his!

*Otti.* Ah, the clear morning! I can see  
St. Mark's:

That black streak is the belfry. Stop:  
Vicenza

Should lie. . . There's Padua, plain enough,  
that blue!

Look o'er my shoulder—follow my finger—  
*Seb.* Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added:  
Where's dew? where's freshness? That  
bruised plant, I bruised

In getting thro' the lattice yestereve,  
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's  
mark

In the dust on the sill.

*Otti.* Oh shut the lattice, pray!

*Seb.* Let me lean out. I cannot scent  
blood here,

Foul as the morn may be—

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, Ottima? There—  
curse

The world, and all outside! Let us throw  
off

This mask: how do you bear yourself?  
Let's out

With all of it!

*Otti.* Best never speak of it.

*Seb.* Best speak again and yet again of it,  
Till words cease to be more than words.  
“His blood,”

For instance—let those two words mean  
“His blood”  
And nothing more. Notice—I’ll say them  
now,  
“His blood.”

*Otti.* Assuredly if I repented  
The deed—

*Seb.* Repent? who should repent, or why?  
What puts that in your head? Did I once  
say

That I repented?

*Otti.* No—I said the deed—

*Seb.* “The deed,” and “the event”—just  
now it was  
“Our passion’s fruit”—the devil take such  
cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,  
I am his cut-throat, you are—

*Otti.* Here is the wine—  
I brought it when we left the house above—  
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black?  
white, then?

*Seb.* But am not I his cut-throat? What  
are you?

*Otti.* There, trudges on his business from  
the Duomo  
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood

Under the green ascent of sycamores—  
If we had come upon a thing like that  
Suddenly—

*Seb.*     “A thing” . . . there again—  
              “a thing !”

*Otti.* Then, Venus’ body, had we come  
              upon

My husband Luca Gaddi’s murdered corpse  
Within there, at his couch - foot, covered  
              close—

Would you have pored upon it? Why persist  
In poring now upon it? For ‘tis hère—  
As much as there in the deserted house—  
You cannot rid your eyes of it: for me,  
Now he is dead I hate him worse—I hate—  
Dare you stay here? I would go back and  
              hold

His two dead hands, and say, I hate you  
              worse

Luca, than—

*Seb.* Off, off; take your hands off mine !  
‘Tis the hot evening—off ! oh, morning, is it ?

*Otti.* There’s one thing must be done—  
              you know what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep  
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

*Seb.* What would come, think you, if we  
              let him lie

Just as he is? Let him lie there until  
The angels take him : he is turned by this  
Off from his face, beside, as you will see.

*Otti.* This dusty pane might serve for looking-glass.

Three, four—four gray hairs ! Is it so you said

A plait of hair should wave across my neck ?  
No—this way !

*Seb.* Ottima, I would give your neck,

Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,

That this were undone ! Killing ?—Kill the world

So Luca lives again !—Ay, lives to sputter  
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign  
Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,  
When all the morning I was loitering here—  
Bid me dispatch my business and be gone.

I would—

*Otti.* See !

*Seb.* No, I'll finish ! Do you think  
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all ?

All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine  
To suffer—there's a recompense in guilt ;  
One must be venturous and fortunate—  
What is one young for, else ? In age we'll sigh

O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown over ;

Still we have lived ! The vice was in its place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn.

His clothes, have felt his money swell my  
purse—

Do lovers in romances sin that way ?

Why, I was starving when I used to call  
And teach you music—starving while you  
plucked me

These flowers to smell !

*Otti.* My poor lost friend !

*Seb.* He gave me

Life—nothing less : what if he did reproach  
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—  
Had he no right ? What was to wonder at ?  
He sate by us at table quietly—

Why must you lean across till our cheeks  
touch'd ?

Could he do less than make pretence to  
strike me ?

'Tis not for the crime's sake—I'd commit ten  
crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out—un-  
done !

And you—O, how feel you ? feel you for me ?

*Otti.* Well, then—I love you better now  
than ever—

• And best (look at me while I speak to you)—  
Best for the crime—nor do I grieve, in truth,  
This mask, this simulated ignorance,  
This affectation of simplicity,  
Falls off our crime ; this naked crime of ours  
May not, now, be looked over—look it down,  
then !

Great? let it be great—but the joys it brought,  
 Pay they or no its price? Come—they or it!  
 Speak not! The past, would you give up  
 the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?  
 Give up that noon I owned my love for you—  
 The garden's silence—even the single bee  
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt  
 And where he hid you only could surmise  
 By some campanula's chalice set a-swing  
 As he clung there—"Yes, I love you!"

*Seb.* And I drew  
 Back; put far back your face with both my  
 hands  
 Lest you should grow too full of me—your  
 face  
 So seemed athirst for my whole soul and  
 body!

*Otti.* And when I ventured to receive you  
 here,

Made you steal hither in the mornings—

*Seb.* When  
 I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,  
 Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread  
 To a yellow haze?

*Otti.* Ah—my sign was, the sun  
 Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree  
 Nipt by the first frost.

*Seb.* You would always laugh  
 At my wet boots—I had to stride thro' grass  
 Over my ankles.

*Otti.* Then our crowning night—

*Seb.* The July night?

*Otti.* The day of it too, Sebald !  
When the heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed  
with heat,  
Its black-blue canopy seemed let descend  
Close on us both, to weigh down each to  
each,  
And smother up all life except our life.  
So lay we till the storm came.

*Seb.* How it came !

*Otti.* Buried in woods we lay, you re-  
collect ;  
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead ;  
And ever and anon some bright white shaft  
Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof—here burnt  
and there,  
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood  
screen  
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a  
venture,  
Feeling for guilty thee and me : then broke  
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

*Seb.* Yes !

*Otti.*—While I stretched myself upon you,  
hands  
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and  
shook  
All my locks loose, and covered you with  
'them—  
You, Sebald, the same you

*Seb.* Slower, Ottima—

*Otti.* And as we lay—

*Seb.* Less vehemently ! Love me—

Forgive me—take not words—mere words—to heart—

Your breath is worse than wine ! Breathe slow, speak slow—

Do not lean on me—

*Otti.* Sebald, as we lay,  
Rising and falling only with our pants,  
Who said, “ Let death come now—’tis right  
to die !

Right to be punished—nought completes such bliss

But woe ! ” Who said that ?

*Seb.* How did we ever rise ?  
Was’t that we slept ? Why did it end ?

*Otti.* I felt you,  
Fresh tapering to a point the ruffled ends

Of my loose locks ’twixt both your humid lips—

(My hair is fallen now, knot it again ! )

*Seb.* I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now,  
and now !

This way ? Will you forgive me—be once more

My great queen ?

*Otti.* Bind it thrice about my brow ;  
Crown me your queen, your spirit’s arbitress,  
Magnificent in sin. Say that !

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-blades—

I should have known there was no blood beneath !

*Otti.* You hate me, then ? You hate me then ?

*Seb.* To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt, And fascinate by sinning ; and show herself Superior—Guilt from its excess, superior To Innocence. That little peasant's voice Has righted all again. Though I be lost, I know which is the better, never fear, Of vice or virtue, purity or lust, Nature, or trick—I see what I have done, Entirely now ! Oh, I am proud to feel Such torments—let the world take credit thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its price ! I hate, hate—curse you ! God's in his heaven !

*Otti.* —Me !

Me ! no, no, Sebald—not yourself—kill me ! Mine is the whole crime—do but kill me—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak—

I always meant to kill myself—wait, you ! Lean on my breast—not as a breast ; don't love me

The more because you lean on me, my own

Heart's Sebald ! There—there—both deaths  
presently !

*Seb.* My brain is drowned now — quite  
drowned : all I feel

Is . . . is at swift-recurring intervals,  
A hurrying-down within me, as of waters  
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit—  
There they go—whirls from a black, fiery sea !

*Otti.* Not to me, God—to him be merciful !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from the Hillside to Orcana. Foreign Students of Painting and Sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the House of JULES, a young French Statuary.*

*1st Student.* Attention ! my own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter. We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

*2nd Stud.* All here ! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him ! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino ! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman

falls in love with him, too ; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all—whereto is this prophetical epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me—“*Here a mammoth-poem lies,—Fouled to death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the simpleton ! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs : Hebe's plaster—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

*3rd Stud.* Subside, my fine fellow ! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

*2nd Stud.* Good !—Only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy—Giovacchino!

*1st Stud.* To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer ? Oh, — listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by : I am spokesman—the verses that

are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came singly from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again — oh, alone, indubitably! — to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalised, heartless bunglers!—So he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalised, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

*Gott.* Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombr, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters, now, you call his . . . I can't laugh at them. . .

*4th Stud.* Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

*Gott.* His discovery of the truth will 'be frightful.

*4th Stud.* That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

*Gott.* See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's

women beside him, in flesh ; these being as much below, as those, above—his soul's aspiration : but now he is to have the real." . . . There you laugh again ! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

*1st Stud.* Schramm ! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody)—will Jules lose the bloom of his youth ?

*Schramm.* Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world ; look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time ; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue ? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on ! Has a man done wondering at women ?—There follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men ?—There's God to wonder at : and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

*1st Stud.* Put Schramm's pipe into his

mouth again ! There, you see ! Well, this — Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day ! Canova's gallery—you know : there he marches first resolutely past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye : all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—“ In your new place, beauty ? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you ! ” Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group ; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length ! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the pre-destined novel thinker in marble !

*5th Stud.* Tell him about the women—go on to the women !

*1st Stud.* Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish ? He was not to wallow in that

mire, at least : he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek—girl at Malamocco ; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's “ hair like sea-moss ”—Schramm knows !—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three lire an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it—a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long—(Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely). And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocca model : we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature ! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress : and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch ! I concocted the main of it : relations were in the way—secrecy must be

observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

*6th Stud.* Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

*5th Stud.* Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it! and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in!

*2nd Stud.* Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off!

*6th Stud.* And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

*Gott.* She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

*1st Stud.* Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

*6th Stud.* She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

*Gott.* How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

*1st Stud.* They go in—now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind,

than that pomegranate—just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated !

## II.—NOON.

*Over Orcana. The House of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE--she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene—I am yours now—you Are mine now—let fate reach me how she likes,

If you'll not die—so, never die ! Sit here— My work-room's single seat : I over-lean This length of hair and lustrous front—they turn

Like an entire flower upward—eyes—lips —last

Your chin—no, last your throat turns—'tis their scent

Pulls down my face upon you ! Nay, look ever

This one way till I change, grow you— I could

Change into you, beloved !

You by me,  
And I by you—this is your hand in mine—  
And side by side we sit : all's true.

Thank God !

I have spoken—speak, you !  
—O, my life to come !  
My Tydeus must be carved, that's there in  
clay ;  
Yet how be carved, with you about the  
chamber ?  
Where must I place you ? When I think  
that once  
This room-full of rough block-work seemed  
my heaven  
Without you ! Shall I ever work again—  
Get fairly into my old ways again—  
Bid each conception stand while, trait by  
trait,  
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone ?  
Will my mere fancies live near you, my  
truth—  
The live truth — passing and repassing  
me—  
Sitting beside me ?

Now speak !

Only, first,  
See, all your letters ! Wasn't not well con-  
trived ?  
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe ; she  
keeps  
Your letters next her skin : which drops out  
foremost ?  
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moon-  
beam  
Into my world !

From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor  
crowns cast off,

Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—  
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,  
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn !

But you must say a “well” to that—say,  
“well !”

Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet ?  
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly  
Even to the silence ! why before I found  
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself  
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff  
For better nature's birth by means of art :  
With me, each substance tended to one form  
Of beauty—to the human Archetype—  
On every side occurred suggestive germs  
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the  
fruit,—

Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,  
Curved beewise o'er its bough ; as rosy  
limbs,

Depending, nestled in the leaves—and just  
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad  
sprang !

But of the stuffs one can be master of, . . .  
How I divined their capabilities !  
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk  
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,  
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom ;  
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure  
To cut its one confided thought clean out

Of all the world: but marble!--'neath my  
tools

More pliable than jelly—as it were  
Some clear primordial creature dug from  
depths

In the Earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,  
And whence all baser substance may be  
worked;

Refine it off to air, you may—condense it  
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,  
When o'er the sudden specks my chisel trips?  
—Not flesh—as flake off flake I scale,  
approach,

Lay bare those blueish veins of blood asleep?  
Lurks flame in no strange windings where,  
surprised

By the swift implement sent home at once,  
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover  
About its track?—

Phene? what—why is this?  
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating  
eyes!

Ah, you will die—I knew that you would  
die!

*PHENE begins, on his having long remained  
silent.*

Now the end's coming—to be sure, it must  
Have ended sometime! Tush—why need I  
speak

Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind  
One half of it, besides ; and do not care  
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.  
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try  
To say the words Natalia made me learn,  
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself  
Where your voice lifted me, by letting it  
Proceed—but can it? Even you, perhaps,  
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,  
The music's life, and me along with that—  
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we  
are

—Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!  
If I could look for ever up to them,  
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,  
All memory of wrong done or suffering  
borne,  
Would drop down, low and lower, to the  
earth  
Whence all that's low comes, and there  
touch and stay  
—Never to overtake the rest of me,  
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,  
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is my-  
self,  
Not so the shame and suffering ; but they  
sink,  
Are left, I rise above them—Keep me so  
Above the world !

But you sink, for your eyes  
 Are altering—altered ! Stay—“ I love you,  
 love you ” . . .  
 I could prevent it if I understood  
 More of your words to me—was’t in the tone  
 Or the words, your power ?

Or stay—I will repeat  
 Their speech, if that contents you ! Only,  
 change  
 No more, and I shall find it presently  
 —Far back here, in the brain yourself  
 filled up.  
 Natalia threatened me that harm would  
 follow  
 Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,  
 But harm to me, I thought she meant,  
 not you.  
 Your friends,—Natalia said they were your  
 friends  
 And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,  
 Observing (what was very strange to see)  
 On every face, so different in all else,  
 The same smile girls like us are used to bear,  
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low ;  
 Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that  
 smile,  
 That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit  
 Which seems to take possession of this  
 world  
 And make of God their tame confederate,  
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know !

But no—Natalia said they were your friends,  
And they assented while they smiled the  
more,

And all came round me,—that thin English-  
man

With light, lank hair seemed leader of the  
rest;

He held a paper—“ What we want,” said he,  
Ending some explanation to his fiends—

“ Is something slow, involved and mystical,  
To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his  
taste

And lure him on so that, at innermost  
Where he seeks sweetness’ soul, he may  
find—this !

—As in the apple’s core, the noisome fly ;  
For insects on the rind are seen at once,  
And brushed aside as soon, but this is found  
Only when on the lips or loathing tongue.”  
And so he read what I have got by heart—  
I’ll speak it,—“ Do not die, love ! I am  
yours ” . . .

Stop—is not that, or like that, part of words  
Yourself began by speaking ? Strange to  
lose

What cost much pains to learn ! Is this  
more right ?

*I am a painter who cannot paint ;  
In my life, a devil rather than saint,  
In my brain, as poor a creature too—  
No end to all I cannot do !*

*Yet do one thing at least I can—  
Love a man, or hate a man  
Supremely : thus my love began.  
Through the Valley of Love I went,  
In its lovingest spot to abide,  
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,  
I found Hate dwelling beside.  
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter  
meant,  
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride !)  
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,  
In its hatefullest nook to dwell ;  
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched  
Love  
Where the deepest shadow fell.  
(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,  
Not the painter's lip should tell !)*

“ And here,” said he, “ Jules probably will  
ask,  
*You have black eyes, love,—you are, sure  
enough,*  
*My peerless bride,—so do you tell, indeed,*  
*What needs some explanation—what means  
this ? ”*

—And I am to go on, without a word—  
*So I grew wiser in Love and Hate,  
From simple, that I was of late.*  
*For once, when I loved, I would enlace*  
*Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face*  
*Of her I loved, in one embrace—*

*As if by mere love I could love immensely !  
And when I hated, I would plunge  
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge  
My foe's whole life out, like a sponge—  
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely !  
But now I am wiser, know better the fashion  
How passion seeks aid from its opposite  
passion,  
And if I see cause to love more, or hate more  
That ever man loved, ever hated, before—  
And seek in the Valley of Love,  
The spot, or the spot in Hate's Grove,  
Where my soul may the sureliest reach  
The essence, nought less, of each,  
The Hate of all Hates, or the Love  
Of all Loves, in its Valley or Grove,—  
I find them the very warders  
Each of the other's borders.  
I love mos., when Love is disguised  
In Hate ; and when Hate is surprised  
In Love, then I hate most : ask  
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,  
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided  
mask,—  
And how, having hated thee,  
I sought long and painfully  
To wound thee, and not prick  
The skin, but pierce to the quick,—  
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight  
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can  
hate !*

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche—who else? But all of them, no doubt,

Hated me: they at Venice—presently  
Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:  
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me!

Keep  
What's here, this gold—we cannot meet again,

Consider—and the money was but meant  
For two years' travel, which is over now,  
All chance, or hope, or care, or need of it!  
This—and what comes from selling these,  
my casts

And books, and medals, except . . . let them go

Together, so the produce keeps you safe,  
Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance  
(For all's chance here) I should survive the gang

At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,  
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide—

*(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA,  
singing—*

*Give her but a least excuse to love me!*

*When—where—*

*How—can this arm establish her above me,  
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,  
There already, to eternally reprove me?*

(“*Hist*”—said *Kate the queen*;  
*But “Oh—” cried the maiden, binding her tresses,*  
 “*Tis only a page that carols unseen*  
 “*Crumbling your hounds their messes?*”)

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,*  
*My heart!*

*Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donour?*

*Merely an earth’s to cleave, a sea’s to part!*  
*But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!*

(“*Nay, list,*”—bade *Kate the queen*;  
*And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,*  
 “*Tis only a page that carols unseen*  
*Fitting your hawks their jesses!*”)

(PIPPA passes.)

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here  
 At Asolo, where still the peasants keep  
 Her memory; and songs tell how many a page  
 Pined for the grace of one so far above



“Was’t not well contrived?  
Their hiding-place is Psyche’s robe.”



His power of doing good to, as a queen—  
 “She never could be wronged, be poor,” he  
 sighed,  
 “For him to help her !”

Yes, a bitter thing  
 To see our lady above all need of us ;  
 Yet so we look ere we will love ; not I,  
 But the world looks so. If whoever loves  
 Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,  
 The blessing or the blest one, queen or  
 page,  
 Why should we always choose the page's  
 part ?

Here is a woman with utter need of me,—  
 I find myself queen here, it seems !

How strange !  
 Look at the woman here with the new soul,  
 Like my own Psyche's,—fresh upon her lips  
 Alit, the visionary butterfly,  
 Waiting my word to enter and make bright,  
 Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.  
 This body had no soul before, but slept  
 Or stirred; was beauteous or ungainly, free  
 From taint or foul with stain, as outward  
 things

Fastened their image on its passiveness :  
 Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again !  
 Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff  
 Be art--and, further, to evoke a soul  
 From form, be nothing ? This new soul is  
 mine !

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save

A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death  
Without me, from their laughter!—Oh, to hear

God's voice plain as I heard it first, before  
They broke in with that laughter! I heard them

Henceforth, not God!

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!  
I wanted silence only—there is clay  
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes  
In Art—the only thing is, to make sure  
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!

Who—what is Lutwyche—what Natalia's friends,

What the whole world except our love—my own,

Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,  
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle  
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—I do but break these paltry models up  
To begin art afresh. Shall I meet Lutwyche,  
And save him from my statue's meeting him?  
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
Like a god going thro' his world there stands

One mountain for a moment in the dusk,

Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow—  
 And you are ever by me while I gaze  
 —Are in my arms as now—as now—as now !  
 Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !  
 Some unsuspected isle in far off seas !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.*<sup>1</sup> So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business—we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors—we know that he is a saint and all that a Bishop should be, who is a great man besides. *Oh! were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian—for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might

<sup>1</sup> "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity,—'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past you'll say—“*How Moses hocus-pocust Egypt's land with fly and locust,*”—or, “*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,*”—or, “*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam;*”—in nowise! “*Shackabracb—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen goods!*” So talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both world's under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, and never an obolus . . .* (Though

thanks to you, or this Intendant thro' you,  
or this Bishop through his Intendant—I  
possess a burning pocket-full of *swanzigers*)  
. . . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

*1st Pol.* There is the girl, then; go and  
deserve them the moment you have pointed  
out to us Signor Luigi and his mother.  
(*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house  
yonder, this long while—not a shutter un-  
closed since morning!

*2nd Pol.* Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the  
silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour—wakes  
up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be  
Prince Metternich, and then dozes again,  
after having bidden young Sebald, the  
foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts:  
never molest such a household, they mean  
well.

*Blup.* Only, cannot you tell me something  
of this little Pippa, I must have to do  
with?—one could make something of that  
name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—  
rhyming to—*Panurge consults Hertrippa*—  
*Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something  
might be done with that name.

*2nd Pol.* Put into rhyme that your head  
and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear  
at half a *swanziger!*! Leave this fooling,  
and look out—the afternoon's over or  
nearly so.

*3rd Pol.* Where in this passport of Signor

Luigi does our principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

*2nd Pol.* Flourish all round—"put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirit on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once," why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect—the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct—we arrest him at once—to-morrow comes Venice—and presently, Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

## III.—EVENING.

*Inside the Turret. LUIGI and his Mother entering.*

*Mother.* If there blew wind, you'd hear a  
long sigh, easing  
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.

*Luigi.* Here in the archway?

*Mother.* Oh no, no—in farther,  
Where the echo is made—on the ridge.

*Luigi.* Here surely, then.  
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!  
Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost  
of a voice,  
Whose body is caught and kept by . . .  
what are those?

Mere withered wall-flowers, waving over-  
head?

They seem an elvish group with thin  
bleached hair

Who lean out of their topmost fortress—  
looking  
And listening, mountain men, to what we  
say,  
Hands under chin of each grave earthy  
face:

Up and show faces all of you!—"All of  
you!"

That's the king's dwarf with the scarlet  
comb: now hark—

Come down and meet your fate ! Hark—  
*"Meet your fate!"*

*Mother.* Let him not meet it, my Luigi—  
 do not

Go to his City ! putting crime aside,  
 Half of these ills of Italy are feigned—  
 Your Pellicos and writers for effect,  
 Write for effect.

*Luigi.* Hush ! say A. writes, and B.

*Mother* These A's and B's write for  
 effect, I say.

Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good  
 Is silent—you hear each petty injury—  
 None of his daily virtues ; he is old,  
 Quiet, and kind, and densely stupid—why  
 Do A. and B. not kill him themselves ?

*Luigi.* They teach  
 Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,  
 Others to succeed ; now, if A. tried and  
 failed  
 I could not teach that : mine's the lesser  
 task.

Mother, they visit night by night . . .

*Mother.* —You, Luigi ?  
 Ah, will you let me tell you what you are ?

*Luigi.* Why not ? Oh, the one thing you  
 fear to hint,  
 You may assure yourself I say and say  
 Ever to myself : at times—nay, even as now  
 We sit, I think my mind is touched—suspect  
 All is not sound : but is not knowing that,

What constitutes one sane or otherwise?  
I know I am thus—so all is right again!  
I laugh at myself as through the town  
    I walk,  
And see men merry as if no Italy  
Were suffering; then I ponder—“I am rich,  
Young, healthy; why should this fact  
    trouble me,  
More than it troubles these?” But it  
    does trouble me!  
No—trouble’s a bad word—for as I walk  
There’s springing and melody and  
    giddiness,  
And old quaint turns and passages of my  
    youth—  
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves—  
Return to me—whatever may amuse me,  
And earth seems in a truce with me, and  
    heaven  
Accords with me, all things suspend their  
    strife,  
The very cicadas laugh “There goes he, and  
    there!  
Feast him, the time is short—he is on his  
    way  
For the world’s sake—feast him this once,  
    our friend!”  
And in return for all this, I can trip  
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps: I go  
This evening, mother!

Mother.                          But mistrust yourself—

Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on  
him.

*Luigi.* Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am  
right!

*Mother.* Mistrust<sup>\*</sup> your judgment, then, of  
the mere means

Of this wild enterprise: say you are right,—  
How should one in your state e'er bring to  
pass

What would require a cool head, a cold  
heart,

And a calm hand? You never will escape.

*Luigi.* Escape—to even wish that, would  
spoil all!

The dying is best part of it. Too much  
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,  
To leave myself excuse for longer life—  
Was not life pressed down, running o'er  
with joy,

That I might finish with it ere my fellows  
Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay?  
I was put at the board-head, helped to all  
At first; I rise up happy and content.  
God must be glad one loves his world so  
much—

I can give news of earth to all the dead  
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and  
great stars

That had a right to come first and see ebb  
The crimson wave that drifts the sun  
away—

Those crescent moons with notched and  
burning rims  
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there  
stood,  
Impatient of the azure—and that day  
In March, a double rainbow stopped the  
storm—  
May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer  
nights—  
Gone are they, but I have them in my  
soul !

*Mother.* (He will not go !)

*Luigi.* You smile at me !

'Tis true.—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,  
Environ my devotedness as quaintly  
As round about some antique altar wreathè  
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's  
skulls.

*Mother.* See now : you reach the city—  
you must cross

His threshold—how ?

*Luigi.* Oh, that's if we conspired !  
Then would come pains in plenty, as you  
guess—

But guess not how the qualities required  
For such an office—qualities I have—  
Would little stead me otherwise employed,  
Yet prove of rarest merit here—here only.  
Every one knows for what his excellence  
Will serve, but no one ever will consider

For what his worst defect might serve ; and  
yet  
Have you not seen me range our coppice  
yonder  
In search of a distorted ash ?—it happens  
The wry spoilt branch's a natural perfect  
bow !  
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned  
man  
Arriving at the palace on my errand !  
No, no—I have a handsome dress packed  
up—  
White satin here, to set off my black hair—  
In I shall march—for you may watch your  
life out  
Behind thick walls—make friends there to  
betray you ;  
More than one man spoils everything.  
March straight—  
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for—  
Take the great gate, and walk (not  
saunter) on  
Thro' guards and guards—I have re-  
hearsed it all  
Inside the Turret here a hundred times—  
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe,  
But where they cluster thickest is the door  
Of doors; they'll let you pass—they'll never  
blab  
Each to the other, he knows not the  
favourite,

Whence he is bound and what's his business  
now—

Walk in—straight up to him—you have no  
knife—

Be prompt, how should he scream? Then,  
out with you!

Italy, Italy, my Italy!

You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I  
could dream

They got about me—Andrea from his exile,  
Pier from his dungeon, Gaultier from his  
grave!

*Mother.* Well, you shall go. Yet seems  
this patriotism

The easiest virtue for a selfish man  
To acquire! He loves himself—and next,  
the world—

If he must love beyond,—but nought  
between:

As a short-sighted man sees nought midway  
His body and the sun above. But you  
Are my adored Luigi—ever obedient  
To my least wish, and running o'er with  
love—

I could not call you cruel or unkind!

Once more, your ground for killing him!—  
then go!

*Luigi.* Now do you ask me, or make  
sport of me?

How first the Austrians got these pro-  
vinces—

(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)  
 . . . Never by conquest but by cunning, for  
 That treaty whereby . . .

*Mother.* Well?

*Luigi.* (Sure  
 he's arrived,

The tell-tale cuckoo—spring's his confidant,  
 And he lets out her April purposes !)

Or . . . better go at once to modern  
 times—  
 ^

He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I under-  
 stand

But can't re-state the matter; that's my  
 boast:

Others could reason it out to you, and prove  
 Things they have made me feel.

*Mother.* Why go to-  
 night?

Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now  
 A morning star. I cannot hear you, Luigi !

*Luigi.* "I am the bright and morning-  
 star," God saith—

And, "to such an one I give the morning-  
 star!"

The gift of the morning-star—have I God's  
 gift

Of the morning-star ?

*Mother.* Chiara will love to see  
 That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

*Luigi.* True, mother. Well for those who  
 live through June !

Great noontides, thunder storms, all glaring  
pomps

Which triumph at the heels of sovereign  
June

Leading his glorious revel thro' our world.

Yes, Chiara will be here—

*Mother.* In June—re-  
member,

Youself appointed that month for her  
coming—

*Luigi.* Was that low noise the echo?

*Mother.* The  
night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes  
upturned

As if life were one long and sweet surprise:  
In June she comes.

*Luigi.* We were to see together  
The Titian at Treviso—there, again!

(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA,  
singing—

*A king lived long ago,  
In the morning of the world,  
When earth was nigher heaven than now :  
And the king's locks curled  
Disparting o'er a forehead full  
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and  
horn*

*Of some sacrificial bull—  
Only calm as a babe new-born :*

*For he was got to a sleepy mood,  
So safe from all decrepitude,  
From age with its bane, so sure gone by,  
(The Gods so loved him while he dreamed,)  
That, having lived thus long, there seemed  
No need the king should ever die.*

*Luigi.* No need that sort of king should ever die !

[From without.] Among the rocks his city was :

*Before his palace, in the sun, -  
He sate to see his people pass,  
And judge them every one  
From its threshold of smooth stone.  
They haled him many a valley-thief  
Caught in the sheep-pens—robber-chief,  
Swarthy and shameless—beggar-cheat—  
Spy-prowler—or rough pirate found  
On the sea-sand left aground ;  
And sometimes clung about his feet,  
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,  
A woman, bitterest wrong-to speak  
Of one with sullen thickset brows :  
And sometimes from the prison-house  
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,  
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed,  
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,  
Worm-like into the temple,—caught*

*At last there by the very God  
Who ever in the darkness strode  
Backward and forward, keeping watch  
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!  
And these, all and every one,  
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

*Luigi.* That king should still judge sitting in the sun !

[From without.] His councillors, on left and right,  
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise  
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,  
Where the very blue had turned to white.  
'Tis said, a Python scared one day  
The breathless city, till he came,  
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,  
Where the old king sate to judge alway;  
But when he saw the sweepy hair,  
Girt with a crown of berries rare  
Which the God will hardly give to wear  
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare  
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,  
At his wondrous forest rites,—  
Beholding this, he did not dare,  
Approach that threshold in the sun,  
Assault the old king smiling there.  
Such grace had kings when the world begun!

(PIPPA passes.)

*Luigi.* And such grace have they, now  
that the world ends !  
The Python in the city, on the throne,  
And brave men, God would crown for  
slaying him,  
Lurks in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.  
Are crowns yet to be won, in this late trial,  
Which weakness makes me hesitate to  
reach ?  
'Tis God's voice calls, how could I stay?  
Farewell !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from  
the Turret to the Bishop's brother's House,  
close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor Girls  
sitting on the steps.*

*1st Girl.* There goes a swallow to Venice  
—the stout sea-farer !

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for  
wings.

Let us all wish ; you, wish first !

*2nd Girl.* I ? This sunset  
To finish.

*3rd Girl.* That old . . . somebody I  
know,  
Grayer and older than my grandfather,  
To give me the same treat he gave last  
week—

Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,

Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and  
mumbling

The while some folly about how well I fare,  
To be let eat my supper quietly—

Since had he not himself been late this  
morning

Detained at—never mind where,—had he  
not . . .

“ Eh, baggage, had I not ! ”—

*2nd Girl.* How she can lie !

*3rd Girl.* Look there—by the nails—

*2nd Girl.* What makes your  
fingers red ?

*3rd Girl.* Dipping them into wine to write  
bad words with,

On the bright table—how he laughed !

*1st Girl.* My turn :

Spring’s come and summer’s coming: I  
would wear

A long loose gown—down to the feet and  
hands—

With plaits here, close about the throat,  
all day :

And all night lie, the cool long nights, in  
bed—

And have new milk to drink—apples to eat,  
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . .

ah, I should say,

This is away in the fields—miles !

*3rd Girl.* Say at once

You’d be at home—she’d always be at home !

Now comes the story of the farm among  
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed  
White blossoms on her as she ran ; why,  
    fool,  
They've rubbed out the chalk-mark of how  
    tall you were,  
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his  
    cage,  
Made a dunghill of your garden—

*1st Girl.*    They, destroy  
My garden since I left them ? well—perhaps !  
I would have done so—so I hope they have !  
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall—  
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,  
It must have been there long ere I was born ;  
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead  
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there  
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long  
    papers,  
And the wasps eat them, prick them through  
    and through.

*3rd Girl.* How her mouth twitches !  
Where was I ?—before  
She broke in with her wishes and long  
    gowns  
And wasps—would I be such a fool !—Oh,  
    here !  
This is my way—I answer every one  
Who asks me why I make so much of him—  
(If you say you love him—straight “ he'll  
    not be gulled ”)

"He that seduced me when I was a girl  
 Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like  
 yours,  
 Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be—  
 that pleases !

(See how that beetle burnishes in the  
 path—

There sparkles he along the dust! and,  
 there—

Your journey to that maize-tuft's spoilt at  
 least !)

*1st Girl.* When I was young, they said  
 if you killed one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend  
 Up there, would shine no more that day nor  
 next.

*2nd Girl.* When you were young? Nor  
 are you young, that's true!

How your plump arms, that were, have  
 dropped away!

Why, I can span them! Cecco beats you  
 still?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.  
 I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair  
 Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,  
 Than black—the men say they are sick of  
 black,

Black eyes, black hair!

*4th Girl.* Sick of yours, like enough!  
 Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys  
 And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,

tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go ! [To the Intendant.] Not you, Ugo ! [The others leave the apartment] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo !

*Inten.* Uguccio—

*Mon.* . . . 'guccio Stefani, man ! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fossombruno ;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh ! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts : take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however : are you bashful to that degree ? For me, a crust and water suffice.

*Inten.* Do you choose this especial night to question me ?

*Mon.* This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother—fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3rd of December, I find him . . .

*Inten.* If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back—they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

*Mon.* Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below ! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3rd of December. Talk of disappoint-

ments ! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor, I did my utmost to advance, that the church might be a gainer by us both : he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of art : here's his letter,— “ He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals—and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure—his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit : there is but one method of escape—confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,”—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio : how think you, Ugo ?

*Inten.* Is Correggio a painter ?

*Mon.* Foolish Jules ! and yet, after all, why foolish ? He may—probably will, fail egregiously ; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet, now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring

it to his, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them ; eh, Ugo ? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo !

*Inten.* Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours : first, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile, — and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls : and now then ? Let this farce, this chatter end now—what is it you want with me ?

*Mon.* Ugo . . .

*Inten.* From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what ?

*Mon.* Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here : if once you set me coughing, Ugo !—

*Inten.* I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess : now ask me what for ! what service I did him—ask me !

*Mon.* I had better not.—I should rip up old disgraces—let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena ?

*Inten.* No, nor needs be—for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

*Mon.* Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp! Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under Heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stay the consequences of his crime; and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to

pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant, by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *podores* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No . . . if my cough would but allow me to speak!

*Inten.* What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

*Mon.* Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in! How should I dare to say . . .

*Inten.* "Forgive us our trespasses"—

*Mon.* My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps: shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardonning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less, keep others out. No—I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

*Inten.* And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

*Mon.* 1, 2—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of that infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and that heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes, and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

*Inten.* So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever

produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly—the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

*Mon.* Liar!

*Inten.* Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity (which happens commonly thrice a year). If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

*Mon.* I see thro' the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once; all shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

*Inten.* And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death—let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her or me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish

off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned, English knave I and the Police employ occasionally.—You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her! 'Tis as well settled once and for ever: some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

(*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA,  
singing—*

*Over-head the tree-tops meet—  
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet—  
There was nought above me, and nought  
below,  
My childhood had not learned to know!  
For, what are the voices of birds  
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words—our words,  
Only so much more sweet?*

*The knowledge of that with my life begun !  
 But I had so near made out the sun,  
 And counted your stars, the Seven and One,  
 Like the fingers of my hand :  
 Nay, I could all but understand  
 Wherefore through heaven the white moon  
 ranges ;  
 And just when out of her soft fifty changes  
 No unfamiliar face might overlook me—  
 Suddenly God took me !      (PIPPA passes.)*

Mon. [Springing up.] My people—one and all—all—within there ! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot ! He dares—I know not half he dares—but remove him quick ! *Miserere mei, Domine!*—quick, I say !

PIPPA'S Chamber again. She enters it.

The bee with his comb,  
 The mouse at her dray,  
 The grub in its tomb,  
 Wile winter away ;  
 But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,  
 How fare they ?  
 Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my Zanze—  
 “Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Bre-ganze”—  
 The summer of life's so easy to spend,  
 And care for to-morrow so soon put away !  
 But winter hastens at summer's end,

And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,  
How fare they?  
No bidding me then to . . . what did  
she say?  
“Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small  
feet shoes  
More like . . . (what said she?) — and  
less like canoes—”  
How pert that girl was! — would I be  
those pert  
Impudent staring women! it had done me,  
However, surely no such mighty hurt  
To learn his name who passed that jest  
upon me:  
No foreigner, that I can recollect,  
Came, as she says, a month since, to  
inspect  
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and  
thick rings  
Of English-coloured hair, at all events.  
Well—if old Luca keeps his good intents,  
We shall do better: see what next year  
brings!  
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear  
More destitute than you, perhaps, next  
year!  
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the  
uncouth name  
But for Monsignor’s people’s sudden clatter  
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter  
As ours; it were, indeed, a serious matter

If silly talk like ours should put to shame  
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,  
The . . . ah, but—ah, but, all the same,  
No mere mortal has a right  
To carry that exalted air ;  
Best people are not angels quite—  
While—not the worst of people's doings scare  
The devils ; so there's that proud look to spare !  
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind ! for  
I have just been the holy Monsignor !  
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,  
And you too, Luigi !—how that Luigi started  
Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed  
On some good errand or another,  
For he past just now in a traveller's trim,  
And the sullen company that prowled  
About his path, I noticed, scowled  
As if they had lost a prey in him.  
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,  
And I was Ottima beside,  
And now what am I ?—tired of fooling !  
Day for folly, night for schooling !  
New year's day is over and spent,  
Ill or well, I must be content !  
Even my lily's asleep, I vow :  
Wake up—here's a friend I've pluckt you !  
See—call this flower a heart's-ease now !  
And something rare, let me instruct you,  
Is this—with petals triply swollen,  
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen.  
While the leaves and parts that with ness

The old proportions and their fitness  
Here remain, unchanged unmoved now—  
So call this pampered thing improved now !  
Suppose there's a king of the flowers  
And a girl-show held in his bowers—  
“ Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,”  
Says he, “ Zanze from the Brenta,  
I have made her gorge polenta  
Till both cheeks are near as bouncing  
As her . . . name there's no pronouncing !  
See this heightened colour too—  
For she swilled Breganze wine  
Till her nose turned deep carmine—  
'Twas but white when wild she grew !  
And only by this Zanze's eyes  
Of which we could not change the size,  
The magnitude of what's achieved  
Otherwise, may be perceived ! ”

Oh what a drear, dark close to my poor day !  
How could that red sun drop in that black  
cloud !

Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away  
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed,  
Day's turn is over—now arrives the night's—  
Oh, Lark, be day's apostle  
To mavis, merle and throstle,  
Bid them their betters jostle  
From day and its delights !  
But at night, brother Howlet, far over the  
woods

Toll the world to thy chantry—  
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods  
 Full complines with gallantry—  
 Then, owls and bats, cowls and twats,  
 Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,  
 Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[*After she has begun to undress herself.*

Now, one thing I should like really to know :  
 How near I ever might approach all these  
 I only fancied being, this long day—  
 —Approach, I mean, so as to touch them—so  
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them—  
 if you please,  
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.  
 For instance, if I wind  
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[*Sitting on the bedside.*

And border Ottima's cloak's hem—  
 Ah, me and my important part with them,  
 This morning's hymn half promised when I  
 rose !

True in some sense or other, I suppose,  
 Though I passed by them all, and felt no sign.

[*As she lies down.*

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.  
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say  
 right.

*All service is the same with God—*

*With God, whose puppets, best and worst,*  
*Are we : there is no last nor first.—*

[*She sleeps.*

## MY LAST DUCHESS.

FERRARA.

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive ; I call  
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's  
hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her ? I said  
" Frà Pandolf " by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they  
durst,

How such a glance came there ; so, not the  
first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas  
not

Her husband's presence only, called that  
spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek : perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say " Her mantle  
laps

" Over my Lady's wrist too much," or " Paint  
" Must never hope to reproduce the faint

" Half-flush that dies along her throat ; " such  
stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart . . . how shall I say ? . . . too  
soon made glad,

Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went every-  
where.

Sir, 'twas all one ! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and  
each

Would draw from her alike the approving  
speech,

Or blush, at least. She thanked men—  
good ; but thanked

Somehow . . . I know not how . . . as if  
she ranked

My gift of a nine hundred years old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling ? Even had you skill  
In speech—which I have not)—to make  
your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say " Just  
this

" Or that in you disgusts me ; here you miss,  
" Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made  
excuse,  
—E'en then would be some stooping, and I  
chuse  
Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no  
doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed  
without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave  
commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There  
she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll  
meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your Master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune, tho',  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze  
for me.

## THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

## I.

You're my friend :  
I was the man the Duke spoke to ;  
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke,  
    too ;  
So, here's the tale from beginning to end,  
My friend !

## II.

Ours is a great wild country :  
If you climb to our castle's top,  
I don't see where your eye can stop ;  
For when you've passed the corn-field  
    country,  
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,  
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,  
And cattle-tract to open-chase,  
And open-chase to the very base  
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,  
Round about, solemn and slow,  
One by one, row after row,  
Up and up the pine-trees go,  
So, like black priests up, and so  
Down the other side again  
To another greater, wilder country,  
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,  
Branch'd thro' and thro' with many a vein

Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;  
Look right, look left, look straight before,—  
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,  
Copper-ore and iron-ore,  
And forge and furnace mould and melt,  
And so on, more and ever more,  
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,  
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea  
shore,  
—And the whole is our Duke's country !

## III.

I was born the day this present Duke  
was—  
(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)  
In the castle where the other Duke was—  
(When I was hopeful and young, not old !)  
I in the Kennel, he in the Bower :  
We are of like age to an hour.  
My father was Huntsman in that day ;  
Who has not heard my father say  
That, when a boar was brought to bay,  
Three times, four times out of five,  
With his huntspear he'd contrive  
To get the killing-place transfixed,  
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?  
And that's why the old Duke had rather  
Have lost a salt-pit than my father,  
And loved to have him ever in call ;  
That's why my father stood in the hall

When the old Duke brought his infant ~~out~~  
To show the people, and while they passed  
The wondrous bantling round about,  
Was first to start at the outside blast  
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,  
Just a month after the babe was born.

"And" quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since  
"The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince  
"Needs the Duke's self at his side :"  
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,  
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,  
Castles a-fire, men on their march,  
The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;  
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed  
The row of crests and shields and banners,  
Of all achievements after all manners,  
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.  
The more was his comfort when he died  
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,  
With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot  
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,  
Petticoated like a herald,  
In a chamber next to an ante-room,  
Where he breathed the breath of page and  
groom,  
What he called stink, and they, perfume :  
—They should have set him on red Berold,  
Mad with pride, like fire to manage !  
They should have got his cheek fresh  
tannage  
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !

Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot  
merlin !

(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game !  
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner  
To flap each broad wing like a banner,  
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)  
Had they broached a cask of white beer from  
Berlin !

—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine—  
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,  
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,  
Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,  
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

## IV.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess  
Was left with the infant in her clutches,  
She being the daughter of God knows who :  
And now was the time to revisit her tribe,  
So, abroad and afar they went, the two,  
And let our people rail and gibe  
At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,  
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,  
Till after long years we had our desire,  
And back came the Duke and his mother  
again.

## V.

And he came back the pertest little ape  
That ever affronted human shape ;

Full of his travel, struck at himself—  
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways  
—Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf  
That our rough North land was the Land of  
Lays,  
The one good thing left in evil days ;  
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,  
And only in wild nooks like ours  
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,  
And see true castles, with proper towers,  
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,  
And manners now as manners were then.  
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without  
knowing it,  
This Duke would fain know he was, without  
being it ;  
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of  
his showing it,  
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our  
seeing it,  
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,  
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of  
them torn-out :  
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,  
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,  
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;  
—They should have set him on red Berold,  
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,  
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire !

## VI.

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :

And out of a convent, at the word,  
Came the Lady, in time of spring.  
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !  
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths  
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes  
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle  
In winter-time when you need to muffle ;  
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a  
figure,

And so we saw the Lady arrive :  
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !  
She was the smallest lady alive,  
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,  
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness  
That over-filled her, as some hive  
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees  
Is crowded with its safe merry bees :  
In truth, she was not hard to please !  
Up she looked, down she looked, round at  
the mead,  
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed  
To look at from outside the walls :  
As for us, styled the “ serfs and thralls,”  
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,  
(With her eyes, do you understand ?)  
Because I patted her horse while I led it ;  
And Max, who rode on her other hand,

Said, no bird flew past but she enquired  
What its true name was, nor ever seemed  
tired—

If that was an eagle she saw hover,—  
If the green and gray bird on the field was  
the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke,  
And as down she sprung, the small foot  
pointed

On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,  
And as if his backbone were not jointed,  
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,  
And welcomed her with his grandest smile ;  
And, mind you, his mother all the while  
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;  
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies  
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;  
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,  
The Lady's face stopped its play,  
As if her first hair had grown gray—  
For such things must begin some one day !

## VII.

In a day or two she was well again ;  
As who should say, “ You labour in vain !  
“ This is all a jest against God, who meant  
“ I should ever be, as I am, content  
“ And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I  
will be ! ”

So, smiling as at first went she.

## VIII.

She was active, stirring, all fire—  
Could not rest, could not tire—  
To a stone she had given life !  
(I myself loved once, in my day),  
—For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's  
    wife  
(I had a wife, I know what I say),  
Never in all the world such an one !  
And here was plenty to be done,  
And she that could do it, great or small,  
She was to do nothing at all.  
There was already this man in his post,  
This in his station, and that in his office,  
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at  
    most,  
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,  
Now outside the Hall, now in it,  
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,  
At the proper place in the proper minute,  
And die away the life between.  
And it was amusing enough, each infraction  
Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)—  
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction  
With which the young Duke and the old  
    Dame  
Would let her advise, and criticise,  
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,  
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :  
They bore it all in complacent guise,

As tho' an artificer, after contriving  
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,  
 Should find with delight it could motion to  
 strike him !  
 So found the Duke, and his mother like  
 him,—  
 The Lady hardly got a rebuff—  
 That had not been contemptuous enough,  
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded  
 applause,  
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

## IX.

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,  
 Paling and ever paling,  
 As the way is with a hid chagrin ;  
 And the Duke perceived that she was  
 ailing,  
 And said in his heart, “ ‘Tis done to spite  
 me,  
 “ But I shall find in my power to right me ! ”  
 Don’t swear, friend—the Old One, many a  
 year,  
 Is in Hell, and the Duke’s self . . . you  
 shall hear.

## X.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-  
 warning,  
 When the stag had to break with his foot,  
 of a morning,





"The police are engaged in sealing up your  
papers, Maffeo"

A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice  
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,  
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,  
And another, and another, and faster and  
faster,

Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water  
rolled :

Then it so chanced that the Duke our master  
Asked himself what were the pleasures in  
season,

And found, since the calendar bade him be  
hearty,

He should do the Middle Age no treason  
In resolving on a hunting-party.

Always provided, old books showed the way  
of it !

What meant old poets by their strictures ?  
And when old poets had said their say of it,  
How taught old painters in their pictures ?  
We must revert to the proper channels,  
Workings in tapestry, paintings on pannels,  
And gather up Woodcraft's authentic tradi-  
tions :

Here was food for our various ambitions,  
As on each case, exactly stated,  
—To encourage your dog, now, the properest  
chirrup,

Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting  
your stirrup—

We of the household took thought and  
debated.

Blessed was he whose back ached with the  
jerkin  
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;  
Blesseder he who nobly sunk " ohs "  
And " ahs " while he tugged on his grand-  
sire's trunk-hose ;  
What signified hats if they had no rims on,  
Each slouching before and behind like the  
scallop,  
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,  
Loaded with lacquer and looped with  
crimson ?  
So that the deer now, to make a short  
rhyme on't,  
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and  
Verderers,  
Might hope for real hunters at length, and  
not murderer,  
And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot  
time on't !

## XI.

Now you must know, that when the first  
dizziness  
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots  
subsided,  
The Duke put this question, " The Duke's  
part provided,  
" Had not the Duchess some share in the  
business ? "

For out of the mouth of two or three  
witnesses,

Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :

And, after much laying of heads together,  
Somebody's cap got a notable feather

By the announcement with proper unction  
That he had discovered the lady's function ;  
Since ancient authors held this tenet,

"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at  
siege,

"Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on  
her jennet,

"And with water to wash the hands of her  
liege

"In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,

"Let her preside at the disemboweling."

Now, my friend, if you had so little religion  
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,  
And thrust her broad wings like a banner  
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;

And if day by day, and week by week,

You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,

And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,  
Would it cause you any great surprise

If when you decided to give her an airing  
You found she needed a little preparing ?

—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,  
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in  
dudgeon ?

Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,  
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,

In what a pleasure she was to participate,—  
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,  
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,  
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not  
dissipate,  
And duly acknowledged the Duke's fore-  
thought,  
But spoke of her health, if her health were  
worth aught,  
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,  
And much wrong now that used to be right,  
So, thanking him, declined the hunting.—  
Was conduct ever more affronting ?  
With all the ceremony settled—  
With the towel ready, and the sewer  
Polishing up his oldest ewer,  
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,  
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-  
ball'd,—  
No wonder if the Duke was nettled !  
And when she persisted nevertheless,—  
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess  
That there ran half round our Lady's chamber,  
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;  
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in  
waiting,  
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating ?  
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why,  
a fervent  
Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your  
servant ;

And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,  
How could I keep at any vast distance?  
And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,  
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,  
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,  
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,  
Turned her over to his yellow mother  
To learn what was decorous and lawful;  
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,  
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct—  
Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once!  
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station,  
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,  
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—  
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free  
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,  
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,  
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!  
Well, somehow or other it ended at last  
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;  
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face  
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,

Stalked the Duke's self with the austere  
grace  
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,—  
From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn  
Unbending of the vertebral column !

## XII.

However, at sunrise our company mustered,  
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,  
And there 'neath his bonnet, the pricker  
blustered,  
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;  
For the court-yard's four walls were filled  
with fog  
You might cut as an axe chops a log.  
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness ;  
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,  
Since before breakfast, a man feels but  
queasily,  
And a sinking at the lower abdomen  
Begins the day with indifferent omen :  
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,  
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it  
asunder  
This way and that from the valley under ;  
And, looking thro' the court-yard arch,  
Down in the valley, what should meet him  
But a troop of Gypsies on their march,  
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet  
him.

## XIII.

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only  
After reaching all lands beside ;  
North they go, south they go, trooping or  
lonely,  
And still, as they travel far and wide,  
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a  
trace there,  
That puts you in mind of a place here, a  
place there :  
But with us, I believe they rise out of the  
ground,  
And nowhere else, I take it, are found.  
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned ;  
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on  
The very fruit they are meant to feed on :  
For the earth—not a use to which they don't  
turn it,  
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,  
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,  
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—  
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle  
With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;  
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within  
wards ;  
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve  
inwards,  
Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on a  
swivel  
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel ;

Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle,  
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle :  
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters ;  
Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and potters !  
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,  
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,  
As if in pure water you dropped and let die  
A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;  
And that other sort, their crowning pride,  
With long white threads distinct inside,  
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle  
Loose such a length and never tangle,  
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,  
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters :  
Such are the works they put their hand to.  
And the uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.  
And these made the troop which our Duke saw sally  
Towards his castle from out of the valley,  
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,  
Come out with the morning to greet our riders ;

And up they wound till they reached the  
ditch,  
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,  
That I knew, as she hobbled from the  
group,  
By her gait, directly, and her stoop,  
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune  
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.  
The oldest Gypsy then above ground;  
And, so sure as the autumn season came  
round,  
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,  
And every time, as she swore, for the last  
time.

And presently she was seen to sidle  
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,  
So that the horse of a sudden reared up  
As under its nose the old witch peered up  
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eyeholes  
Of no use now but to gather brine,  
And began a kind of level whine  
Such as they used to sing to their viols  
When their ditties they go grinding  
Up and down with nobody minding:  
And, then as of old, at the end of the  
humming  
Her usual presents were forthcoming  
—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of  
trebles  
(Just as a sea-shore stone holding a dozen  
fine pebbles),

Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a  
pipe-end,—

And so she awaited her annual stipend.  
But this time, the Duke would scarcely  
vouchsafe

A word in reply ; and in vain she felt  
With twitching fingers at her belt  
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,  
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch  
safe,—

Till, either to quicken his apprehension,  
Or possibly with an after-intention,  
She was come, she said, to pay her duty  
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.

No sooner had she named his Lady,  
Then a shine lit up the face so shady,  
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—  
For it struck him, the babe just wanted  
weaning ;

If one gave her a taste of what life was and  
sorrow,

She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-  
morrow ;

And who so fit a teacher of trouble  
As this sordid crone bent well nigh double ?  
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture  
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute  
That their own fleece serves for natural fur  
suit),

He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his  
gesture,

The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate  
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.  
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned  
From out of the throng, and while I drew  
near

He told the crone, as I since have reckoned  
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear  
With circumspection and mystery,  
The main of the Lady's history,  
Her frowardness and ingratitude ;  
And for all the crone's submissive attitude  
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits  
tightening,  
And her brow with assenting intelligence  
brightening,  
As tho' she engaged with hearty good will  
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,  
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.  
And so, just giving her a glimpse  
Of a purse, with the air of a man who  
imps  
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the  
hernshaw,  
He bade me take the gypsy mother  
And set her telling some story or other  
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,  
To while away a weary hour  
For the Lady left alone in her bower,  
Whose mind and body craved exertion  
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

## XIV.

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere  
` curvettter,  
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo  
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and  
servitor,  
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.  
And what makes me confident what's to be  
told you  
Had all along been of this crone's devising,  
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold  
you,  
There was a novelty quick as surprising :  
For first, she had shot up a full head in  
stature,  
And her step kept pace with mine nor  
faltered,  
As if age had foregone its usurpature,  
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,  
And the face looked quite of another nature,  
And the change reached too, whatever the  
change meant,  
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement,  
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,  
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,  
Like the band-roll strung with tomans  
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's :  
And under her brow, like a snail's horns  
newly  
Come out as after the rain he paces,

Two unmistakable eye-points duly  
Live and aware looked out of their places.  
So we went and found Jacynth at the entry  
Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry ;  
I told the command and produced my  
companion,  
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,  
For since last night, by the same token,  
Not a single word had the Lady spoken :  
So they went in both to the presence to-  
gether,  
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

## xv.

And now, what took place at the very first  
of all,  
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :  
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall  
On that little head of hers and burn it,  
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly  
Asleep of a sudden and there continue  
The whole time sleeping as profoundly  
As one of the boars my father would pin you  
'Twixt the eyes where the life holds garrison,  
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison !  
But where I begin my own narration  
Is a little after I took my station  
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,  
And, having in those days a falcon eye,  
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,

From where the bushes thinlier crested  
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one  
tree :—

When, in a moment, my ear was arrested  
By—was it singing, or was it saying,  
Or a strange musical instrument playing  
In the chamber?—and to be certain  
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,  
And there lay Jacynth asleep,  
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,  
In a rosy sleep along the floor,  
With her head against the door;  
While in the midst, on the seat of state,  
Like a Queen the Gypsy woman sate,  
With head and face downbent  
On the Lady's head and face intent,  
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,  
The Lady sate between her knees  
And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,  
And on those hands her chin was set,  
And her upturned face met the face of the  
crone

Wherein the eyes had grown and grown  
As if she could double and quadruple  
At pleasure the play of either pupil  
—Very like by her hands slow fanning,  
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers  
They moved to measure like bell clappers  
—I said, is it blessing, is it banning,  
Do they applaud you or burlesque you?  
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?

When, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,  
At once I was stopped by the Lady's expression :  
For it was life her eyes were drinking  
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,  
Life's pure fire received without shrinking,  
Into the heart and breast whose heaving  
Told you no single drop they were leaving—  
Life, that filling her, past redundant  
Into her very hair, back swerving  
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,  
As her head thrown back showed the white  
throat curving,  
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,  
Moving to the mystic measure,  
Bounding as the bosom bounded.  
I stopped short, more and more confounded,  
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,  
As she listened and she listened,—  
When all at once a hand detained me,  
And the selfsame contagion gained me,  
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,  
Making out words and prose and rhyme,  
Till it seemed that the music furled  
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped  
From under the words it first had propped,  
And left them midway in the world,  
And word took word as hand takes hand,  
I could hear at last, and understand,

And when I held the unbroken thread,  
The Gypsy said :—

“ And so at last we find my tribe,  
And so I set thee in the midst,  
And to one and all of them describe  
What thou saidst and what thou didst,  
Our long and terrible journey thro’,  
And all thou art ready to say and do  
In the trials that remain :  
I trace them the vein and the other vein  
That meet on thy brow and part again,  
Making our rapid mystic mark ;  
And I bid my people prove and probe  
Each eye’s profound and glorious globe  
Till they detect the kindred spark  
In those depths so dear and dark,  
Like the spots that snap, and burst, and flee,  
Circling over the midnight sea.  
And on that young round cheek of thine  
I make them recognise the tinge,  
As when of the costly scarlet wine  
They drip so much as will impinge  
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat  
One thick gold drop from the olive’s coat  
Over a silver plate whose sheen  
Still thro’ the mixture shall be seen.  
For, so I prove thee, to one and all,  
Fit, when my people ope their breast,  
To see the sign, and hear the call,  
And take the vow, and stand the test  
Which adds one more child to the rest—

When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,  
And the world is left outside.  
For there is probation to decree,  
And many and long must the trials be  
Thou shalt victoriously endure,  
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure :  
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay  
Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—  
Let once the vindicating ray  
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,  
And steel and fire have done their part  
And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;  
So, trial after trial past,  
Wilt thou fall at the very last  
Breathless, half in trance  
With the thrill of the great deliverance,  
Into our arms for evermore ;  
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled  
About thee, what we knew before,  
How love is the only good in the world.  
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,  
Or brain devise, or hand approve !  
Stand up, look below,  
It is our life at thy feet we throw  
To step with into light and joy ;  
Not a power of life but we'll employ  
To satisfy thy nature's want ;  
Art thou the tree that props the plant,  
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—  
Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?

If any two creatures grew into one,  
They would do more than the world has done ;  
Tho' each apart were never so weak,  
Yet vainly thro' the world should ye seek  
For the knowledge and the might  
Which in such union grew their right :  
So, to approach, at least, that end,  
And blend,—as much as may be, blend  
Thee with us or us with thee,  
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,  
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,  
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?  
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown,  
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,  
Die on thy boughs and disappear  
While not a leaf of thine is sere ? . . .  
Or is the other fate in store,  
And art thou fitted to adore,  
To give thy wondrous self away,  
And take a stronger nature's sway ?  
I foresee and I could foretell  
Thy future portion, sure and well—  
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak  
true,  
And let them say what thou shalt do !  
Only, be sure thy daily life,  
In its peace, or in its strife,  
Never shall be unobserved ;  
We pursue thy whole career,  
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—  
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved

We are beside thee, in all thy ways,  
With our blame, with our praise,  
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,  
Glad, sorry—but indifferent, no !  
Whether it is thy lot to go,  
For the good of us all, where the haters meet  
In the crowded city's horrible street ;  
Or thou step alone thro' the morass  
Where never sound yet was  
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,  
For the air is still, and the water still,  
When the blue breast of the dipping coot  
Dives under, and all again is mute.  
So at the last shall come old age,  
Decrepit as befits that stage ;  
How else wouldest thou retire apart  
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,  
And gather all to the very least  
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,  
Let fall through eagerness to find  
The crowning dainties yet behind ?  
Ponder on the entire past  
Laid together thus at last,  
When the twilight helps to fuse  
The first fresh, with the faded hues,  
And the outline of the whole,  
As round eve's shades their framework roll,  
Grandly fronts for once thy soul :  
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam  
Of yet another morning breaks,  
And like the hand which ends a dream,

Death, with the might of his sunbeam  
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,  
Then—”

Ay, then, indeed, something would  
happen !

But what ? For here her voice changed like  
a bird's ;

There grew more of the music and less of  
the words ;

Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen  
To paper and put you down every syllable,  
With those clever clerkly fingers,  
All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers  
In this old brain of mine that's but ill  
able

To give you even this poor version  
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with  
stammering

—More fault of those who had the hammering  
Of prosody into me and syntax,

And did it, not with hobnails but tin-tacks !  
But to return from this excursion,—

Just, do you mark, when the song was  
sweetest,

The peace most deep and the charm com-  
pletest,

There came, shall I say, a snap—  
And the charm vanished !

And my sense returned, so strangely banished,  
And, starting as from a nap,  
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,

With Jacynth asleep ; and but one spring  
made I,  
Down from the casement, round to the  
portal,  
Another minute and I had entered,  
When the door opened, and more than  
mortal  
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred  
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,  
The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by  
palsy.  
She was so different, happy and beautiful,  
I felt at once that all was best,  
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,  
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.  
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,  
—I saw the glory of her eye,  
And the brow's height and the breast's  
expanding,  
And I was hers to live or to die.  
As for finding what she wanted,  
You know God Almighty granted  
Such little signs should serve his wild  
creatures  
To tell one another all their desires,  
So that each knows what its friend requires,  
And does its bidding without teachers.  
I preceded her ; the crone  
Followed silent and alone ;  
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered  
In the old style ; both her eyes had slunk

Back to their pits ; her stature shrunk ;  
 In short, the soul in its body sunk  
 Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.  
 We descended, I preceding ;  
 Crossed the court with nobody heeding ;  
 All the world was at the chase,  
 The court-yard like a desert-place,  
 The stable emptied of its small fry ;  
 I saddled myself the very palfrey  
 I remember patting while it carried her,  
 The day she arrived and the Duke married  
 her.

And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving  
 Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing  
 The lady had not forgotten it either,  
 And knew the poor devil so much beneath her  
 Would have been only too glad for her  
 service

To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk  
 dervise,

But unable to pay proper duty where  
 owing it

Was reduced to that pitiful method of  
 showing it :

For though the moment I began setting  
 His saddle on my own nag of Berold's  
 begetting

(Not that I meant to be obtrusive),  
 She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,  
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,  
 And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,

And a little shake of the head, refused me,  
I say, although she never used me,  
Yet when she was mounted, the gypsy  
behind her,  
And I ventured to remind her,  
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness  
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,  
—Something to the effect that I was in  
readiness  
Whenever God should please she needed  
me.—  
Then, do you know, her face looked down  
on me  
With a look that placed a crown on me,  
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her  
bosom—  
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,  
Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse  
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,  
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself  
So understood,—that a true heart so may  
gain  
Such a reward,—I should have gone home  
again,  
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself !  
It was a little plait of hair  
Such as friends in a convent make  
To wear, each for the other's sake,—  
This, see, which at my breast I wear,  
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),  
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.

And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this  
is idle,

These are feelings it is not good to foster,—  
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,  
And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost  
her !

#### XVI.

When the liquor's out, why clink the  
cannakin?

I did think to describe you the panic in  
The redoubtable breast of our master the  
mannikin,

And what was the pitch of his mother's  
yellowness,

How she turned as a shark to snap the  
spare-rib

Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving  
Carib,

When she heard, what she called, the flight  
of the feloness—

But it seems such child's play

What they said and did with the lady away !  
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,  
Always made me—and no doubt makes you  
—sick.

Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so  
stern

As that sweet form disappeared thro' the  
postern,

She that kept it in constant good humour,

It ought to have stopped; there seemed  
nothing to do more.

But the world thought otherwise and went  
on,

And my head's one that its spite was spent  
on:

Thirty years are fled since that morning,  
And with them all my head's adorning.  
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,  
As you expect, of suppressed spite,  
The natural end of every adder  
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:  
But she and her son agreed, I take it,  
That no one should touch on the story to  
wake it,

For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled  
fiery,

So they made no search and small inquiry—  
And when fresh gypsies have paid us a visit,  
I've

Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,  
But told them they're folks the Duke don't  
want here,

And bade them make haste and cross the  
frontier.

Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke  
was glad of it,

And the old one was in the young one's  
stead,

And took, in her place, the household's head,  
And a blessed time the household had of it!

And were I not, as a man may say, cautious  
How I trench, more than needs, on the  
nauseous,  
I could favour you with sundry touches  
Of the paint-smutches with which the  
Duchess  
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's  
yellowness  
(To get on faster) until at last her  
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster  
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse :  
Till in short she grew from scalp to udder  
Just an object to make you shudder !

## XVII.

You're my friend—  
What a thing friendship is, world without  
end !  
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,  
As if somebody broached you a glorious  
runlet,  
And poured out all lovelily, sparkling, and  
sunlit,  
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,  
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—  
Friendship's as good as that monarch of  
fluids  
To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-  
outs,—  
Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when  
the thin sand doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and  
guarantees  
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant  
ease !  
I have seen my little Lady once more,  
Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest  
of it,  
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you  
before ;  
I always wanted to make a clean breast  
of it,  
And now it is made—why, my heart's-blood,  
that went trickle,  
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets,  
Is pumped up brisk now, thro' the main  
ventricle,  
And genially floats me about the giblets !  
I'll tell you what I intend to do :  
I must see this fellow his sad life thro'  
—He is our Duke after all,  
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall ;  
My father was born here and I inherit  
His fame, a chain he bound his son  
with,—  
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,  
But there's no mine to blow up and get  
done with,  
So I must stay till the end of the chapter :  
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,  
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,  
One day or other, his head in a morion,

And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick  
    up

Slain by some onslaught fierce of hiccup.

And then, when red doth the sword of our  
    Duke rust,

And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with  
    a blue crust,

Then, I shall scrape together my earnings ;  
For, you see, in the Churchyard Jacynth  
    reposes,

And our children all went the way of the  
    roses—

It's a long lane that knows no turnings—

One needs but little tackle to travel in,

So, just one stout cloak shall I indue,

And for a staff, what beats the javelin

With which his boars my father pinned  
    you ?

And then, for a purpose you shall hear  
    presently,

Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinfull,

I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly ?

Sorrow in vain and despondency sinful.

What's a man's age ? He must hurry more,  
    that's all ;

Cram in a day, what his youth took a year  
    to hold ;

When we mind labour, then only, we're  
    too old—

What age had Methusalem when he begat  
    Saul ?

And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship  
sees,  
(Come all the way from the north-parts with  
sperm oil)

I shall get safely out of the turmoil  
And arrive one day at the land of the gypsies  
And find my lady, or hear the last news  
of her

From some old thief and son of Lucifer,  
His forehead chapletted green with wreathy  
hop,

Sunburned all over like an Æthiop :  
And when my Cotnar begins to operate .  
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a  
proper rate,  
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each  
flaccid dent.,

I shall drop in with—as if by accident—  
“ You never knew then, how it all ended,  
“ What fortunes good or bad attended  
“ The little lady your Queen befriended ? ”  
—And when that’s told me, what’s re-  
maining ?

This world’s too hard for my explaining—  
The same wise judge of matters equine  
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old  
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,  
And for strong Cotnar drank French weak  
wine,

He also must be such a Lady’s scorner  
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau,

Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw

—So, I shall find out some snug corner  
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,  
Turn myself round and bid the world good-night;

And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's  
blowing

Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)  
To a world where's to be no further throwing  
Pearls before swine that can't value them.  
Amen!

## SAUL.

### I.

SAID Abner, “At last thou art come! Ere  
I tell, ere thou speak,  
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!” Then I  
wished it, and did kiss his cheek.  
And he, “Since the King, O my friend, for  
thy countenance sent,  
Neither drunken or eaten have we; nor until  
from his tent  
Thou return with the joyful assurance the  
King liveth yet,  
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with  
the water be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a  
space of three days,  
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants,  
of prayer or of praise,  
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have  
ended their strife,  
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch  
sinks back upon life.

## II.

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved ! God's  
child with his dew  
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies  
still living and blue  
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings,  
as if no wild heat  
Were now raging to torture the desert ! ”

## III.

Then I, as was meet,  
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and  
rose on my feet,  
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The  
tent was unlooped ;  
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and  
under I stooped ;  
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch,  
all withered and gone,  
That extends to the second enclosure, I  
groped my way on

Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.  
Then once more I prayed,  
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and  
was not afraid,  
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!"  
And no voice replied.  
At the first I saw nought but the blackness;  
but soon I descried  
A something more black than the blackness  
—the vast, the upright  
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and  
slow into sight  
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and  
blackest of all;—  
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-  
roof,—showed Saul.

## IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both  
arms stretched out wide  
On the great cross-support in the centre,  
that goes to each side:  
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,—  
as, caught in his pangs  
And waiting his change the king-serpent all  
heavily hangs,  
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till  
deliverance come  
With the spring-time,—so agonised Saul,  
drear and stark, blind and dumb.





## V.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies  
 we twine round its chords  
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-  
 tide—those sunbeams like swords !  
 And I first played the tune all our sheep  
 know, as, one after one,  
 So docile they come to the pen-door, till  
 folding be done.  
 They are white and untorп by the bushes,  
 for lo, they have fed  
 Where the long grasses stifle the water  
 within the stream's bed ;  
 And now one after one seeks its lodgings,  
 as star follows star  
 Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue  
 and so far !

## VI.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the  
 cornland will each leave his mate  
 To fly after the player ; then, what makes  
 the crickets elate,  
 Till for boldness they fight one another : and  
 then, what has weight  
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his  
 sand house—  
 There are none such as he for a wonder, half  
 bird and half mouse !—

God made all the creatures and gave them  
our love and our fear,  
To give sign, we and they are his children,  
one family here.

## VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,  
their wine-song, when hand  
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good  
friendship, and great hearts expand  
And grow one in the sense of this world's  
life—And then, the last song  
When the dead man is praised on his journey  
—“Bear, bear him along  
With his few faults shut up like dead  
flowerets ! are balm-seeds not here  
To console us ? The land has none left,  
such as he on the bier.  
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother ! ”  
—And then, the glad chaunt  
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens,  
next, she whom we vaunt  
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—  
And then, the great march  
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and  
buttress an arch  
Nought can break ; who shall harm them, our  
friends ?—Then, the chorus intoned  
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory  
enthroned . . .  
But I stopped here—for here in the darkness,  
Saul groaned.

## VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence,  
and listened apart ;  
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul  
shuddered,—and sparkles 'gan dart  
From the jewels that woke in his turban at  
once with a start—  
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies  
courageous at heart.  
So the head—but the body still moved not,  
still hung there erect.  
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued  
it unchecked,  
As I sang,—

## IX.

“ Oh, our manhood's prime  
vigour ! no spirit feels waste,  
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor  
sinew unbraced.  
Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from  
rock up to rock—  
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-  
tree,—the cool silver shock  
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the  
hunt of the bear,  
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched  
in his lair.  
And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over  
with gold dust divine,  
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher ,  
the full draught of wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel  
where bulrushes tell  
That the water was wont to go warbling so  
softly and well.  
How good is man's life, the mere living !  
    how fit to employ  
All the heart and the soul and the senses,  
for ever in joy !  
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy  
father, whose sword thou didst guard  
When he trusted thee forth with the armies,  
for glorious reward ?  
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother,  
held up as men sung  
The low song of the nearly-departed, and  
heard her faint tongue  
Joining in while it could to the witness,  
    'Let one more attest,  
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a life-  
time, and all was for best ? . . .'  
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong  
triumph, not much,—but the rest.  
And thy brothers, the help and the contest,  
the working whence grew  
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles,  
the spirit strained true !  
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boy-  
hood of wonder and hope,  
Present promise, and wealth of the future  
beyond the eye's scope—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch ; a  
people is thine ;  
And all gifts which the world offers singly,  
on one head combine !  
On one head, all the beauty and strength,  
love and rage, like the throe  
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour,  
and lets the gold go :  
High ambition and deeds which surpass it,  
fame crowning it,—all  
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature  
—King Saul !”

## x.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart,  
hand, harp and voice,  
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each  
bidding rejoice  
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as  
when, dare I say,  
The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains  
through his array,  
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot —  
“Saul !” cried I, and stopped,  
And waited the thing that should follow.  
Then Saul, who hung propt  
By the tent's crosss-upport in the centre,  
was struck by his name.  
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy sum-  
mons goes right to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand  
her, that held (he alone,  
While the vale laughed in freedom and  
flowers) on a broad bust of stone  
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,  
—leaves grasp of the sheet?  
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunder-  
ously down to his feet,  
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive  
yet, your mountain of old,  
With his rents, the successive bequeathings  
of ages untold—  
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles,  
each furrow and scar  
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the  
tempest—all hail, there they are!  
Now again to be softened with verdure,  
again hold the nest  
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young  
to the green on its crest  
For their food in the ardours of summer!  
One long shudder thrilled  
All the tent till the very air tingled, then  
sank and was stilled,  
At the King's self left standing before me,  
released and aware.  
What was gone, what remained? all to  
traverse 'twixt hope and despair—  
Death was past, life not come—so he waited.  
Awhile his right hand  
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too  
vacant forthwith to remand

To their place what new objects should enter; 'twas Saul as before.  
 I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes,  
     nor was hurt any more  
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye  
     watch from the shore  
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a  
     sun's slow decline  
 Over hills which, resolved in stern silence,  
     o'erlap and entwine  
 Base with base to knit strength more in-  
     tense: so, arm folded in arm  
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings sub-  
     sided .

## xi.

What spell or what charm,  
 (For, awhile there was trouble within me)  
     what next should I urge  
 To sustain him where song had restored  
     him?—Song filled to the verge  
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing  
     all that it yields  
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the  
     beauty! Beyond, on what fields,  
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to  
     brighten the eye  
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend  
     them the cup they put by?  
 He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not  
     —he lets me praise life,  
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

## XII.

Then fancies grew ripe  
Which had come long ago on the pastures,  
when round me the sheep  
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled  
slow as in sleep,  
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the  
world that might lie  
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip  
'twixt the hill and the sky :  
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained  
to be passed with my flocks,  
Let me people at least with my fancies, the  
plains and the rocks,  
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and  
image the show  
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I  
hardly shall know !  
Schemes of life, its best rules and right  
uses, the courage that gains,  
And the prudence that keeps what men  
strive for." And now these old trains  
Of vague thought came again ; I grew  
surer ; so once more the string  
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as  
thus—

## XIII.

"Yea, my King,"  
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere  
comforts that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common  
by man and by brute :  
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in  
our soul it bears fruit.  
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—  
how its stem trembled first  
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler ;  
then safely outburst  
The fan-branches all round ; and thou  
mindedst when these too, in turn  
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed  
perfect : yet more was to learn,  
Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-  
fruit. Our dates shall we slight,  
When their juice brings a cure for all  
sorrow ? or care for the plight  
Of the palm's self whose slow growth pro-  
duced them ? Not so ! stem and branch  
Shall decay, nor be known in their place,  
while the palm-wine shall staunch  
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I  
pour thee such wine.  
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for !  
the spirit be thine !  
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee,  
thou still shalt enjoy  
More indeed, than at first when unconscious,  
the life of a boy.  
Crush that life, and behold its wine running !  
each deed thou hast done  
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world ;  
until e'en as the sun

Looking down on the earth, though clouds  
    spoil him, though tempests efface,  
Can find nothing his own deed produced  
    not, must everywhere trace  
The results of his past summer-prime,—so,  
    each ray of thy will,  
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long  
    over, shall thrill  
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour,  
    till they too give forth  
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill  
    the south and the north  
With the radiance thy deed was the germ  
    of. Carouse in the past.  
But the licence of age has its limit ; thou  
    diest at last.  
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the  
    rose at her height,  
So with man—so his power and his beauty  
    for ever take flight.  
No ! again a long draught of my soul-wine !  
    look forth o'er the years—  
Thou hast done now with eyes for the  
    actual ; begin with the seer's !  
Is Saul dead ? in the depth of the vale make  
    his tomb—bid arise  
A gray mountain of marble heaped four-  
    square, till built to the skies.  
Let it mark where the great First King  
    slumbers—whose fame would ye know ?  
Up above see the rock's naked face, where  
    the record shall go

In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such  
was Saul, so he did ;  
With the sages directing the work, by the  
populace chid,—  
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised  
there ! Which fault to amend,  
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar,  
whereon they shall spend  
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their  
praise, and record  
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—  
the statesman's great word  
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment.  
The river's a-wave  
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other  
when prophet winds rave :  
So the pen gives unborn generations their  
due and their part  
In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty,  
thank God that thou art.”

## XIV.

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou  
who didst grant me that day,  
And before it not seldom hast granted, thy  
help to essay,  
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my  
Shield and my Sword  
In that act where my soul was thy servant,  
thy word was my word,—

Still be with me, who then at the summit  
of human endeavour  
And scaling the highest man's thought could,  
gazed hopeless as ever  
On the new stretch of Heaven above me—  
till, mighty to save,  
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance  
—God's throne from man's grave?  
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my  
voice to my heart,  
Which can scarce dare believe in what  
marvels that night I took part,  
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone  
with my sheep,  
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish  
like sleep!  
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while  
Hebron upheaves  
The dawn struggling with night on his  
shoulder, and Kidron retrieves  
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

## xv.

I say then,—my song  
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch,  
and ever more strong  
Made a proffer of good to console him—he  
slowly resumed  
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The  
right hand replumed

His black locks to their wonted composure,  
adjusted the swathes  
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that  
his countenance bathes,  
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds  
now his loins as of yore,  
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with  
the clasp set before.  
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere  
error had bent  
The broad brow from the daily communion;  
and still, though much spent  
Be the life and the bearing that front you,  
the same, God did choose,  
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,  
never quite lose.  
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till,  
stayed by the pile  
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments,  
he leaned there awhile,  
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the  
tent-prop, to raise  
His bent head, and the other hung slack—  
till I touched on the praise  
I foresaw from all men in all times, to the  
man patient there,  
And thus ended, the harp falling forward.  
Then first I was 'ware  
That he sat, as I say, with my head just  
above his vast knees  
Which were thrust out on each side around  
me, like oak-roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked  
up to know  
If the best I could do had brought solace :  
he spoke not, but slow  
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he  
laid it with care  
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on  
my brow : thro' my hair  
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent  
back my head, with kind power—  
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men  
do a flower.  
Thus held he me there with his great eyes  
that scrutinised mine—  
And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but  
where was the sign ?  
I yearned—" Could I help thee, my father,  
inventing a bliss,  
I would add to that life of the past, both the  
future and this.  
I would give thee new life altogether, as  
good, ages hence,  
As this moment,—had love but the warrant,  
love's heart to dispense ! "

## xvi.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp  
more—no song more ! outbroke—  
" I have gone the whole round of Creation :  
I saw and I spoke !

I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,  
received in my brain  
And pronounced on the rest of his handiwork  
—returned him again  
His creation's approval or censure : I spoke  
as I saw.  
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's  
love, yet all's law !  
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me.  
Each faculty tasked  
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where  
a dewdrop was asked.  
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at  
wisdom laid bare.  
Have I forethought? how purblind, how  
blank, to the Infinite care !  
Do I task any faculty highest, to image  
success ?  
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no  
more and no less,  
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and  
God is seen God  
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the  
soul and the clod.  
And thus looking within and around me, I  
ever renew  
(With that stoop of the soul which in bend-  
ing upraises it too)  
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to  
God's All-Complete,  
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb  
to his feet !

Yet with all this abounding experience, this  
Deity known,  
I shall dare to discover some province, some  
gift of my own.  
There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard  
to hoodwink,  
I am fain to keep still in abeyance (I laugh  
as I think),  
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot  
ye, I worst  
E'en the Giver in one gift—Behold ! I could  
love if I durst !  
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man  
may o'ertake  
God's own speed in the one way of love : I  
abstain, for love's sake !  
—What, my soul ? see thus far and no  
farther ? when doors great and small,  
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should  
the hundredth appal ?  
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in  
the greatest of all ?  
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's  
ultimate gift,  
That I doubt his own love can compete with  
it ? here, the parts shift ?  
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the  
end, what Began ?—  
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do  
all for this man,  
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him,  
who yet alone can ?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the  
bare will, much less power,  
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the  
marvellous dower  
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to  
make such a soul,  
Such a body, and then such an earth for  
insphering the whole?  
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm  
tears attest)  
These good things being given, to go on,  
and give one more, the best?  
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him,  
maintain at the height  
This perfection,—succeed with life's day-  
spring, death's minute of night?  
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul,  
the mistake,  
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—  
and bid him awake  
From the dream, the probation, the prelude,  
to find himself set  
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—  
a new harmony yet  
To be run, and continued, and ended—who  
knows?—or endure!  
The man taught enough by life's dream, of  
the rest to make sure.  
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning  
intensified bliss,  
And the next world's reward and repose, by  
the struggle in this.

## XVII.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest,  
'tis I who receive:  
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power  
to believe.  
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover,  
as prompt to my prayer  
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these  
arms to the air.  
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and  
nature, thy dread Sabaoth:  
*I* will?—the mere atoms despise me! and  
why am I loth  
To look that, even that in the face too? why  
is it I dare  
Think but lightly of such impuissance? what  
stops my despair?  
This;—'tis not what man Does which exalts  
him, but what man Would do!  
See the King—I would help him but cannot,  
the wishes fall through,  
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow,  
grow poor to enrich,  
To fill up his life, to starve my own out, I  
would—knowing which,  
I know that my service is perfect.—Oh,  
speak through me now!  
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt  
Thou—so wilt Thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,  
uttermost Crown—  
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave  
up nor down  
One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is  
by no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation  
joins issue with death !  
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty  
be proved  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of  
Being beloved !  
He who did most, shall bear most ; the  
strongest shall stand the most weak.  
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for !  
my flesh, that I seek  
In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O  
Saul, it shall be  
A Face like my face that receives thee : a  
Man like to me,  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever !  
a Hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to  
thee ? See the Christ stand !'

## XVIII.

I know not too well how I found my way  
home in the night.  
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to  
left and to right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the  
alive—the aware—  
I repressed, I got through them as hardly,  
as strugglingly there,  
As a runner beset by the populace famished  
for news—  
Life or death. The whole earth was  
awakened, hell loosed with her crews ;  
And the stars of night beat with emotion,  
and tingled and shot  
Out in fire the strong pain of pent know-  
ledge : but I fainted not.  
For the Hand still impelled me at once and  
supported—suppressed  
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet,  
and holy behest,  
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the  
earth sank to rest.  
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had  
withered from earth—  
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the  
day's tender birth ;  
In the gathered intensity brought to the gray  
of the hills ;  
In the shuddering forests' new awe ; in the  
sudden wind-thrills ;  
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each  
with an eye sidling still  
Tho' averted, in wonder and dread ; and the  
birds stiff and chill

That rose heavily, as I approached them,  
    made stupid with awe !  
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he  
    felt the new Law.  
The same stared in the white humid faces  
    upturned by the flowers ;  
The same worked in the heart of the cedar,  
    and moved the vine-bowers.  
And the little brooks witnessing, murmured,  
    persistent and low,  
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices  
—E'en so ! it is so.

**"DE GUSTIBUS—"****I.**

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,  
(If loves remain)  
In an English lane,  
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.  
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—  
A boy and a girl, if the good ~~tates~~ please,  
Making love, say,—  
The happier they !  
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon  
And let them pass, as they will too soon,  
With the beanflowers' boon,  
And the blackbird's tune,  
And May, and June !

**II.**

What I love best in all the world,  
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,  
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,  
(If I get my head from out the mouth  
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
And come again to the land of lands)—  
In a sea-side house to the farther south,  
Where the baked cicadas die of drouth,  
And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,  
My sentinel to guard the sands  
To the water's edge. For, what expand  
Without the house, but the great opaque  
Blue breadth of sea, and not a break?  
While, in the house, for ever crumbles  
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles  
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
And says there's news to-day—the king  
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,  
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.  
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.  
Italy, my Italy!  
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—  
(When fortune's malice  
Lost her, Calais.)  
Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it, "Italy."  
Such lovers old are I and she;  
So it always was, so it still shall be!

## WOMEN AND ROSES.

## I.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree,  
And which of its roses three  
Is the dearest rose to me ?

## II.

Round and round, like a dance of snow  
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go  
Floating the women faded for ages,  
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.  
Then follow the women fresh and gay,  
Living and loving and loved to-day.  
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of  
maidens,  
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## III.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,  
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :  
Bees pass it unimpeached.

## IV.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,  
You, great shapes of the antique time !

How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,  
Break my heart at your feet to please you ?  
Oh ! to possess, and be possessed !  
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !  
But once of love, the poesy, the passion,  
Drink once and die !—In vain, the same  
fashion,  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## V.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed ;  
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,  
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

## VI.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth  
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,  
So will I bury me while burning,  
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,  
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !  
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,  
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure !  
Girdle me once ? But no—in their old  
measure  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

## VII.

Dear rose without a thorn,  
Thy bud's the babe unborn :  
First streak of a new morn.

## VIII.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !  
What's far conquers what is near.  
Roses will bloom nor want beholders.  
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh  
moulders.  
What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?  
A novel grace and a beauty strange.  
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began  
her,  
Shaped her to his mind !—Alas ! in like  
manner  
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO  
ABD-EL-KADR.

[1842.]

As I ride, as I ride,  
With a full heart for my guide,  
So its tide rocks my side,  
As I ride, as I ride,  
That, as I were double-eyed,  
He, in whom our Tribes confide,  
Is descried, ways untried  
As I ride, as I ride.

## II.

As I ride, as I ride  
 To our Chief and his Allied,  
 Who dares chide my heart's pride  
 As I ride, as I ride?  
 Or are witnesses denied—  
 Through the desert waste and wide  
 Do I glide unespied  
 As I ride, as I ride?

## III.

As I ride, as I ride,  
 When an inner voice has cried,  
 The sands slide, nor abide  
 (As I ride, as I ride)  
 O'er each visioned Homicide  
 That came vaunting (has he lied?)  
 To reside—where he died,  
 As I ride, as I ride.

## IV.

As I ride, as I ride,  
 Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,  
 Yet his hide, streaked and pied,  
 As I ride, as I ride,  
 Shows where sweat has sprung and  
 dried,  
 —Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—

How has vied stride with stride  
As I ride, **as** I ride !

## v.

As I ride, as I ride,  
Could I loose what Fate has tied,  
Ere I pried, she should hide  
As I ride, as I ride,  
All that's meant me : satisfied  
When the Prophet and the Bride  
Stop veins I'd have subside  
As I ride, as I ride !

## MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA.

## I.

Hist, but a word, fair and soft !  
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues !  
Answer the question I've put you so oft—  
What do you mean by your mountainous  
fugues ?  
See, we're alone in the loft,

## II.

I, the poor organist here,  
Hugues, the composer of note—

Dead, though, and done with, this many a  
year—

Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,  
Make the world prick up its ear !

## III.

See, the church empties apace.

Fast they extinguish the lights—

Hallo, there, sacristan ! five minutes' grace !

Here's a crank pedal wants setting to  
rights,

Baulks one of holding the base.

## IV.

See, our huge house of the sounds

Hushing its hundreds at once,

Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds

—Oh, you may challenge them, not a  
response

Get the church saints on their rounds !

## V.

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt ?

—March, with the moon to admire,

Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,

Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,

Put rats and mice to the rout—

## VI.

Aloys and Jurien and Just—  
 Order things back to their place,  
 Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,  
 Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament  
 lace,  
 Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

## VII.

Here's your book, younger folks shelve !  
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,  
 Just now, your masterpiece, hard number  
 twelve ?  
 Here's what should strike,—could one  
 handle it cunningly.  
 Help the axe, give it a helve !

## VIII.

Page after page as I played,  
 Every bar's rest where one wipes  
 Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and  
 surveyed  
 O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes  
 Whence you still peeped in the shade.

## IX.

Sure you were wishful to speak,  
 You, with brow ruled like a score,

Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,  
 Like two great breves, as they wrote them  
     of yore,  
 Each side that bar, your straight beak !

## X.

Sure you said—“Good, the mere notes !  
 Still, couldst thou take my intent,  
 Know what procured me our Company's  
     votes—  
 Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,  
 Parted the sheep from the goats !”

## XI.

Well then, speak up, never flinch !  
 Quick, ere my candle's a snuff  
 —Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost  
     inch—  
 I believe in you, but that's not enough  
 Give my conviction a clinch !

## XII.

First you deliver your phrase  
 —Nothing propound, that I see,  
 Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—  
 Answered no less, where no answer needs  
     be :  
 Off start the Two on their ways !

## XIII.

Straight must a Third interpose,  
Volunteer needlessly help—  
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his  
nose,  
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,  
Argument's hot to the close !

## XIV.

One dissertates, he is candid—  
Two must discept,—has distinguished !  
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did :  
Four protests, Five makes a dart at the  
thing wished—  
Back to One, goes the case bandied !

## XV.

One says his say with a difference—  
More of expounding, explaining !  
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance—  
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-  
restraining—  
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

## XVI.

One is incisive, corrosive—  
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant—

Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive—  
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant—  
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

## XVII.

Now, they ply axes and crowbars—  
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue  
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's  
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue ?  
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars ?

## XVIII.

*Est fuga, volvitur rotar !*  
 On we drift. Where looms the dim port ?  
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota—  
 Something is gained, if one caught but the import—  
 Show it us—Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

## XIX.

What with affirming, denying.  
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,  
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance  
 I'm trying . . .  
 There ! See our roof, its gilt moulding  
 and groining  
 Under those spider-webs lying !

## XX.

So your figure broadens and thickens,  
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,  
Till one exclaims—" But where's music, the  
dickens ?  
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web  
strengthens  
Blacked to the stoutest of tickens ? "

## XXI.

I for man's effort am zealous.  
Prove me such censure's unfounded !  
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—  
Hopes 'twas for something his organ-pipes  
sounded,  
Tiring three boys at the bellows ?

## XXII.

Is it your moral of Life ?  
Such a web, simple and subtle,  
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,  
Backward and forward each throwing his  
shuttle,  
Death ending all with a knife ?

## XXIII.

Over our heads Truth and Nature—  
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,  
Ins and outs weaving a new legislature—

God's gold just shining its last where that  
lodges  
Palled beneath Man's usurpature !

## xxiv.

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,  
Cherub and trophy and garland.  
Nothings grow something which quietly  
closes  
Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse of  
the far land  
Gets through our comments and glozes.

## xxv.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,  
(Say we and make up a visage)  
So many men with such various intentions  
Down the past ages must know more than  
this age !  
Leave the web all its dimensions !

## xxvi.

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf?  
Proved a mere mountain in labour?  
Better submit—try again—what's the clef?  
'Faith, it's no trifle for pipe and for  
tabor—  
. Four flats—the minor in F.

## XXVII.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.  
 Learning it once, who would lose it?  
 Yet all the while a misgiving will linger—  
 Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse  
 it—  
 Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her?

## XXVIII.

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*  
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)  
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the  
 arena!  
 Say the word, straight I unstopp the Full-  
 Organ,  
 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

## XXIX.

While in the roof, if I'm right there—  
 . . . Lo, you, the wick in the socket!  
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!  
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket!  
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,  
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-  
 prayers,  
 And find a poor devil at end of his cares  
 At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-  
 riddled stairs?  
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

## BEFORE.

## I.

LET them fight it out, friend ! things have gone too far.

God must judge the couple ! leave them as they are

—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,  
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story.

## II.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,

Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,

Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,

Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entoilment ?

## III.

Which of them's the culprit, how must he conceive

God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve !

'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her.

Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

## IV.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,  
 Then go live his life out ! life will try his  
 nerves,  
 When the sky, which noticed all, makes no  
 disclosure,  
 And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

## V.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of  
 rose,  
 Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him  
 as he goes.  
 For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,  
 With the sly mute thing beside there for a  
 warden.

## VI.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to  
 his side,  
 A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious  
 hide ?  
 When will come an end of all the mock  
 obeisance,  
 And the price appear that pays for the mis-  
 feasance ?

## VII.

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred  
 man ?  
 Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he  
 can.

He that strove thus evil's lump with good to  
leaven,  
Let him give his blood at last and get his  
heaven.

## VIII.

All or nothing, stake it ! trusts he God or no ?  
Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be it so.  
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent  
pauses,  
Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-  
clauses.

## IX.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him ? While God's  
champion lives,  
Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why he  
forgives.  
But you must not end my friend ere you  
begin him ;  
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while  
breath is in him.

## X.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of  
all,  
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his  
fall ?  
No ?—Let go, then—both the fighters to  
their places—  
While I count three, step you back as many  
paces.

## AFTER.

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first  
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man !  
Death has done all death can.  
And absorbed in the new life he leads,  
He recks not, he heeds  
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance--both strike  
On his senses alike,  
And are lost in the solemn and strange  
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase  
His offence, my disgrace ?  
I would we were boys as of old  
In the field, by the fold—  
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn  
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place—  
Cover the face.

## IN THREE DAYS.

## I.

So, I shall see her in three days  
And just one night, but nights are short,

Then two long hours, and that is morn.  
 See how I come, unchanged, unworn—  
 Feel, where my life broke off from thine,  
 How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—  
 Only a touch and we combine !

## II.

Too long, this time of year, the days !  
 But nights—at least the nights are short.  
 As night shows where her one moon is,  
 A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,  
 So, life's night gives my lady birth  
 And my eyes hold her ! what is worth  
 The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ? .

## III.

O loaded curls, release your store  
 Of warmth and scent as once before  
 The tingling hair did, lights and darks  
 Out-breaking into fairy sparks  
 When under curl and curl I pried  
 After the warmth and scent inside,  
 Thro' lights and darks how manifold—  
 The dark inspired, the light controlled !  
 As early Art embrowned the gold.

## IV.

What great fear—should one say, “Three  
 days  
 That change the world, might change as  
 well

Your fortune ; and if joy delays,  
Be happy that no worse befell.”  
What small fear—if another says,  
“ Three days and one short night beside  
May throw no shadow on your ways ;  
But years must teem with change untried,  
With chance not easily defied,  
With an end somewhere undescried.”  
No fear !—or if a fear be born  
This minute, it dies out in scorn.  
Fear ? I shall see her in three days  
And one night, now the nights are short,  
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

## IN A YEAR.

## I.

NEVER any more  
While I live,  
Need I hope to see his face  
As before.  
Once his love grown chill,  
Mine may strive—  
Bitterly we re-embrace,  
Single still.

## II.

Was it something said,  
Something done,

Vexed him? was it touch of hand,  
 Turn of head?  
 Strange! that very way  
 Love begun.  
 I as little understand  
 Love's decay.

## III.

When I sewed or drew,  
 I recall  
 How he looked as if I sang,  
 —Sweetly too.  
 If I spoke a word,  
 First of all  
 Up his cheek the colour sprang,  
 Then he heard.

## IV.

Sitting by my side,  
 At my feet,  
 So he breathed the air I breathed,  
 Satisfied!  
 I, too, at love's brim  
 Touched the sweet:  
 I would die if death bequeathed  
 Sweet to him.

## V.

“ Speak, I love thee best ! ”  
 He exclaimed.

“ Let thy love my own foretell,—”  
 I confessed :  
 “ Clasp my heart on thine  
 Now unblamed,  
 Since upon thy soul as well  
 Hangeth mine ! ”

## VI.

Was it wrong to own,  
 Being truth ?  
 Why should all the giving prove  
 His alone ?  
 I had wealth and ease,  
 Beauty, youth—  
 Since my lover gave me love,  
 I gave these.

## VII.

That was all I meant,  
 —To be just,  
 And the passion I had raised  
 To content.  
 Since he chose to change  
 Gold for dust,  
 If I gave him what he praised  
 Was it strange ?

## VIII.

Would he loved me yet,  
 On and on,

While I found some way undreamed  
 —Paid my debt !  
 Gave more life and more,  
 Till, all gone,  
 He should smile, "She never seemed  
 Mine before.

## IX.

"What—she felt the while,  
 Must I think ?  
 Love's so different with us men,"  
 He should smile.  
 "Dying for my sake  
 White and pink !  
 Can't we touch these bubbles then  
 But they break ? "

## X.

Dear, the pang is brief,  
 Do thy part,  
 Have thy pleasure. How perplext  
 Grows belief !  
 Well, this cold clay clod  
 Was man's heart.  
 Crumble it—and what comes next ?  
 Is it God ?

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM  
ABROAD.

## I.

OH, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood  
sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard  
bough  
In England—now !

## II.

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the  
swallows—  
Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the  
hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—a tthe bent spray's  
edge—  
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song  
twice over,

Lest you should think he never could re-capture  
The first fine careless rapture !  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower,  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

### HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away ;  
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay ;  
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;  
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar grand and gray ;  
“Here and here did England help me,— how can I help England ?”—say,  
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,  
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

## THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST. PRAXED'S CHURCH.

[ROME, 15—.]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !  
Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping  
back ?  
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know  
not ! Well—  
She, men would have to be your mother  
once,  
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !  
What's done is done, and she is dead  
beside,  
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,  
And as she died so must we die ourselves,  
And thence ye may perceive the world's a  
dream.  
Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie  
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,  
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I  
ask  
“ Do I live, am I dead ? ” Peace, peace  
seems all.  
St. Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;  
And so, about this tomb of mine. I  
fought  
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye  
know :

—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;  
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South  
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!  
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence  
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,  
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,  
And up into the aery dome where live  
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:  
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,  
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,  
With those nine columns round me, two and two,  
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:  
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe,  
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse  
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,  
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,  
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!  
Draw close: that conflagration of my church  
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!

My sons, ye would not be my death ? Go dig  
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press  
 stood,

Drop water gently till the surface sinks,  
 And if ye find . . . ah God, I know not,  
 I ! . . .

Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,  
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,  
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,  
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,  
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .  
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,  
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,  
 So, let the blue lump poise between my  
 knees,

Like God the Father's globe on both his  
 hands

Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,  
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and  
 burst !

Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :  
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?  
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ? Black—  
 'Twas ever antique-black I meant ! How  
 else

Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath ?  
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,  
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and  
 perchance

Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,  
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,

St. Praxed in a glory, and one Pan  
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment  
off,  
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know  
Ye mark me not ! What do they whisper  
thee,  
Child of my bowels, Anselm ? ' Ah, ye hope  
To revel down my villas while I gasp  
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine  
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles  
at !  
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then !  
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve  
My bath must needs be left behind, alas !  
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,  
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the  
world—  
And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray  
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,  
And mistresses with great smooth marbly  
limbs ?  
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,  
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every  
word,  
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—  
Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !  
And then how I shall lie through centuries,  
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,  
And see God made and eaten all day long,  
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste  
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke !

For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,  
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,  
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,  
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone  
     can point,  
 And let the bedclothes for a mort-cloth drop  
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work :  
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange  
     thoughts  
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,  
 About the life before I lived this life,  
 And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and  
     Priests,  
 St. Praxed at his sermon on the mount,  
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,  
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,  
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,  
 —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?  
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !  
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.  
 All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope  
 My villas : will ye ever eat my heart ?  
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,  
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,  
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,  
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase  
 With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,  
 And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx  
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus  
     down,  
 To comfort me on my entablature

Whereon I am to lie till I must ask  
 "Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me,  
 there!  
 For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude  
 To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it!  
 Stone—  
 Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which  
 sweat  
 As if the corpse they keep were oozing  
 through—  
 And no more *lapis* to delight the world!  
 Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,  
 But in a row: and, going, turn your backs  
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,  
 And leave me in my church, the church for  
 peace,  
 That I may watch at leisure if he leers—  
 Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,  
 As still he envied me, so fair she was!

## CAVALIER TUNES.

## I.—MARCHING ALONG.

I:

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,  
 Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:  
 And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
 And see the rogues flourish and honest folk  
 droop,

Marched them along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

## II.

God for King Charles ! Pym and such  
carles  
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous  
parles !  
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,  
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup  
Till you're (*Chorus*) *marching along, fifty-*  
*score strong,*  
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

## III.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell  
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry  
as well !  
England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !  
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here  
(*Cho.*) *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*  
*Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this*  
*song !*

## IV.

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his  
snarls  
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent  
carles !

Hold by the right, you double your might ;  
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the  
 fight,

(Cho.) *March we along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this  
 song !*

### II.—GIVE A ROUSE.

#### I.

King Charles, and who'll do him right  
 now ?

King Charles, and who's ripe for fight  
 now ?

Give a rouse : here's, in Hell's despite now,  
 King Charles !

#### II.

Who gave me the goods that went since ?  
 Who raised me the house that sank once ?  
 Who helped me to gold I spent since ?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once ?

(Cho.) *King Charles, and who'll do him right  
 now ?*

*King Charles, and who's ripe for fight  
 now ?*

*Give a rouse : here's, in Hell's despite  
 now,  
 King Charles !*

## III.

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
 By the old fool's side that begot him?  
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,  
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(Cho.) *King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*

*King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?*

*Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,*

*King Charles!*

## III.—BOOT AND SADDLE.

## I.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
 Rescue my Castle, before the hot day  
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,  
 (Cho.) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

## II.

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;  
 Many's the friend there, will listen and  
     pray  
 “God's luck to gallants that strike up the  
     lay,  
 (Cho.) “*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*”

## III.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads'  
 array :  
 Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my  
 fay,  
 (Cho.) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

## IV.

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and  
 gay,  
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering,  
 "Nay!  
 "I've better counsellors; what counsel they?  
 (Cho.) "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

## I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon  
 A mile or so away  
 On a little mound, Napoléon  
 Stood on our storming-day;  
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
 As if to balance the prone brow  
 Oppressive with its mind.

## II.

Just as perhaps he mused " My plans  
 " That soar, to earth may fall,  
 " Let once my army-leader Lannes,  
 " Waver at yonder wall,"—  
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
 A rider, bound on bound  
 Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew  
 Until he reached the mound.

## III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
 And held himself erect  
 By just his horse's mane, a boy :  
 You hardly could suspect—  
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
 Scarce any blood came thro')  
 You looked twice ere you saw his  
 breast  
 Was all but shot in two.

## IV.

" Well," cried he, " Emperor, by God's  
 grace  
 " We've g̃t you Ratisbon !  
 " The Marshal's in the market-place,  
 " And you'll be there anon  
 " To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
 " Where I, to heart's desire,

"Perched him!" The Chief's eye flashed ;  
 his plans  
 Soared up again like fire.

## v.

The Chief's eye flashed ; but presently  
 Softened itself, as sheathes  
 A film the mother eagle's eye  
 When her bruised eaglet breathes :  
 "You're wounded!" "Nay," his soldier's  
 pride  
 Touched to the quick, he said :  
 "I'm killed, Sire!" And, his Chief beside,  
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

## THE LOST LEADER.

## I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
 Found the one gift o'er which fortune bereft us,  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote ;  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out  
 silver,  
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :  
 How all our copper had gone for his  
 service !  
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had  
 been proud !

We that had loved him so, followed him,  
honoured him,  
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
Learned his great language, caught his clear  
accents,  
Made him our pattern to live and to die !  
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch  
from their graves !  
He alone breaks from the van and the free-  
men,  
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

## II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his  
presence ;  
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his  
lyre ;  
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his  
quiescence,  
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade  
aspire :  
Blot out his name, then,—record one lost  
soul more,  
One task more declined, one more footpath  
untrod,  
One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for  
angels,  
One wrong more to man, one more insult  
to God !

Life's night begins : let him never come back  
to us !

There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of  
twilight,

Never glad confident morning again !  
Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike  
gallantly,

Aim at our heart ere we pierce through  
his own ;  
Then let him receive the new knowledge and  
wait us,

Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the  
throne !

## GARDEN-FANCIES.

### I.

#### THE FLOWER'S NAME.

##### I.

HERE's the garden she walked across,  
Arm in my arm, such a short while since :  
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss  
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince !  
She must have reached this shrub ere she  
turned,  
As back with that murmur the wicket  
swung ;

For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot  
spurned,  
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

## II.

Down this side of the gravel-walk  
She went while her robe's edge brushed  
the box :  
And here she paused in her gracious talk  
To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.  
Roses, ranged in valiant row,  
I will never think that she passed you by !  
She loves you noble roses, I know ;  
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie !

## III.

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,  
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;  
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,  
Its soft meandering Spanish name.  
What a name ! was it love, or praise ?  
Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake ?  
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,  
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

## IV.

Roses, if I live and do well,  
I may bring her, one of these days,  
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,  
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase !

But do not detain me now ; for she lingers  
 There, like sunshine over the ground,  
 And ever I see her soft white fingers  
 Searching after the bud she found.

## v. \*

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow  
 not,  
 Stay as you are and be loved for ever !  
 Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,  
 Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never !  
 For while thus it pouts, her fingers  
 wrestle,  
 Twinkling the audacious leaves between,  
 Till round they turn and down they  
 nestle—  
 Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

## VI.

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;  
 Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;  
 Is there no method to tell her in Spanish  
 June's twice June since she breathed it  
 with me ?  
 Come, bud, show me the least of her  
 traces,  
 Treasure my lady's lightest footfall  
 —Ah, you may flout and turn up your  
 faces—  
 Roses, you are not so fair after all !

## II.

## SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

## I.

Plague take all your pedants, say I !  
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,  
Centuries back was so good as to die,  
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land ;  
This, that was a book in its time,  
Printed on paper and bound in leather,  
Last month in the white of a matin-prime  
Just when the birds sang all together.

## II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,  
And under the arbute and laurustine  
Read it, so help me grace in my need,  
From title-page to closing line.  
Chapter on chapter did I count,  
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge ;  
Added up the mortal amount ;  
And then proceeded to my revenge.

## III.

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice  
An owl would build in, were he but sage ;  
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis  
In a castle of the middle age,

Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;  
 When he'd be private, there might he  
 spend  
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber :  
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

## IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,  
 —I knew at the bottom rain-drippings  
 stagnate ;  
 Next a handful of blossoms I plucked  
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's  
 magnate ;  
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a  
 loaf,  
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;  
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf  
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

## V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss  
 And gum that locked our friend in  
 limbo,  
 A spider had spun his web across,  
 And sate in the midst with arms a-  
 kimbo ;  
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,  
 And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*  
*Cantate !* quoth I, as I got a rake,  
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

## VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,  
With all the binding all of a blister,  
And great blue spots where the ink has run,  
And reddish streaks that wink and glister  
O'er the page so beautifully yellow—  
Oh, well have the droppings played their  
tricks !  
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this  
fellow ?  
Here's one stuck in his chapter six !

## VII.

How did he like it, when the live creatures  
Tickled and toused and browsed him all  
over,  
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,  
Came in, each one, for his right of trover ;  
When the water-beetle with great blind deaf  
face  
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,  
And the newt borrowed just so much of the  
preface  
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

## VIII.

All that life, and fun, and romping,  
All that frisking, and twisting, and  
coupling.

While slowly our poor friend's leaves were  
swamping,  
And clasps were cracking, and covers  
suppling !  
As if you had carried sour John Knox  
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or  
Munich,  
Fastened him into a front-row box,  
And danced off the Ballet with trousers  
and tunic.

## ix.

Come, old martyr ! What, torment enough  
is it ?  
Back to my room shall you take your  
sweet self !  
Good - bye, mother - beetle ; husband - eft,  
*sufficit* !  
See the snug niche I have made on my  
shelf :  
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover  
you,  
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be  
gay,  
And with E. on each side, and F. right  
over you,  
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day !

## THE LABORATORY.

[ANCIEN RÉGIME]

## I.

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,  
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling  
whitely,  
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's  
smithy—  
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

## II.

He is with her ; and they know that I know  
Where they are, what they do : they believe  
my tears flow  
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled  
to the drear  
Empty church, to pray God in, for them !—  
I am here.

## III.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,  
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste !  
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange  
things, . . .  
Than go where men wait me and dance at  
the King's.

## IV.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?  
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings  
come!  
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,  
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

## V.

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,  
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!  
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,  
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

## VI.

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give  
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes  
to live!  
But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her  
head,  
And her breast, and her arms, and her hands,  
should drop dead!

## VII.

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!  
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and  
dim?  
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and  
stir,  
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

## VIII.

What a drop ! She's not little, no minion  
like me—  
That's why she ensnared him : this never  
will free  
The soul from those strong, great eyes,—  
say, “no !”  
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

## IX.

For only last night, as they whispered, I  
brought  
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought  
Could I keep them one half minute fix'd, she  
would fall,  
Shrivelled ; she fell not ; yet this does it all !

## X.

Not that I bid you spare her the pain !  
Let death be felt and the proof remain ;  
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—  
He is sure to remember her dying face !

## XI.

Is it done ? Take my mask off ! Nay, be  
not morose,  
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close :  
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee—  
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me ?

## XII.

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your  
fill,  
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if  
you will !  
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it  
brings  
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the  
King's !

## THE CONFESSORIAL.

[SPAIN.]

## I.

IT is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,  
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope  
Are lies, and lies—there ! thro' my door  
And ceiling, there ! and walls and floor,  
There, lies, they lie, shall still be hurled,  
Till spite of them I reach the world !

## II.

You think Priests just and holy men !  
Before they put me in this den,  
I was a human creature too,  
With flesh and blood like one of you,  
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride  
Like lilies in your world outside.

## III.

I had a lover—shame avaunt !  
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,  
Was kissed all over till it burned,  
By lips the truest, love e'er turned  
His heart's own tint : one night they kissed  
My soul out in a burning mist.

## IV.

So, next day when the accustomed train  
Of things grew round my sense again,  
“ That is a sin,” I said—and slow  
With downcast eyes to church I go,  
And pass to the confession-chair,  
And tell the old mild father there.

## V.

But when I faulter Beltran’s name,  
“ Ha ? ” quoth the father ; “ much I blame  
“ The sin ; yet wherefore idly grieve ?  
“ Despair not,—strenuously retrieve !  
“ Nay, I will turn this love of thine  
“ To lawful love, almost divine.

## VI.

“ For he is young, and led astray,  
“ This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,  
“ To change the laws of church and state ;  
“ So, thine shall be an angel’s fate,

" Who, ere the thunder breaks, should  
roll

" Its cloud away and save his soul.

## VII.

" For, when he lies upon thy breast,

" Thou mayst demand and be possessed

" Of all his plans, and next day steal

" To me, and all those plans reveal,

" That I and every priest, to purge

" His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

## VIII.

That father's beard was long and white,  
With love and truth his brow seemed  
bright;

I went back, all on fire with joy,  
And, that same evening, bade the boy,  
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,  
Something to prove his love of me.

## IX.

He told me what he would not tell  
For hope of Heaven or fear of Hell;  
And I lay listening in such pride.  
And, soon as he had left my side,  
Tripped to the church by morning-light  
To save his soul in his despite.

## X.

I told the father all his schemes,  
 Who were his comrades, what their dreams ;  
 "And now make haste," I said, "to pray  
 "The one spot from his soul away ;  
 "To-night he comes, but not the same  
 "Will look!" At night he never came.

## XI.

Nor next night : on the after-morn,  
 I went forth with a strength new-born :  
 The church was empty ; something drew  
 My steps into the street ; I knew  
 It led me to the market-place—  
 Where, lo,—on high—the father's face !

## XII.

That horrible black scaffold drest—  
 The stapled block . . . God sink the rest !  
 That head strapped back, that blinding vest,  
 Those knotted hands and naked breast—  
 Till near one busy hangman pressed—  
 And—on the neck these arms caressed. . . .

## XIII.

No part in aught they hope or fear !  
 No Heaven with them, no Hell,—and here,  
 No Earth, not so much space as pens  
 My body in their worst of dens  
 But shall bear God and Man my cry—  
 Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

## EVELYN HOPE.

## I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !

Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;  
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,  
Beginning to die too, in the glass.  
Little has yet been changed, I think—  
The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

## II.

Sixteen years old when she died !

Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name—  
It was not her time to love : beside,  
Her life had many a hope and aim,  
Duties enough and little cares,  
And now was quiet, now astir—  
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,  
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

## III.

It is too late then, Evelyn Hope ?

What, your soul was pure and true,  
The good stars met in your horoscope,  
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—

And just because I was thrice as old,  
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,  
 Each was nought to each, must I be told ?  
 We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

## IV.

No, indeed ! for God above  
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
 And creates the love to reward the love,—  
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake !  
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few—  
 Much is to learn and much to forget  
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

## v.

But the time will come,—at last it will,  
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,  
 In the lower earth, in the years long still,  
 That body and soul so pure and gay ?  
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,  
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red—  
 And what would you do with me, in fine,  
 In the new life come in the old one's stead.

## VI.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,  
 Given up myself so many times,  
 Gained me the gains of various men,  
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;  
 Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,  
 Either I missed or itself missed me—  
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !  
 What is the issue ? let us see !

## VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while ; . . .  
 My heart seemed full as it could hold—  
 There was place and to spare for the frank  
 young smile  
 And the red young mouth and the hair's  
 young gold.  
 So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—  
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.  
 There, that is our secret ! go to sleep ;  
 You will wake, and remember, and under-  
 stand.

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD.

## I.

LET's contend no more, Love,  
 Strive nor weep—  
 All be as before, Love,  
 —Only sleep !

## II.

What so wild as words are?  
—I and thou  
In debate as birds are,  
Hawk on bough !

## III.

See the creature stalking  
While we speak—  
Hush and hide the talking,  
Cheek on cheek !

## IV.

What so false as truth is,  
False to thee?  
Where the serpent's tooth is,  
Shun the tree—

## V.

Where the apple reddens  
Never pry—  
Lest we lose our Edens,  
Eve and I !

## VI.

Be a god and hold me  
With a charm—  
Be a man and fold me  
With thine arm !

## VII.

Teach me, only teach, Love !  
 As I ought  
 I will speak thy speech, Love,  
 Think thy thought—

## VIII.

Meet, if thou require it,  
 Both demands,  
 Laying flesh and spirit  
 In thy hands !

## IX.

That shall be to-morrow  
 Not to-night :  
 I must bury sorrow  
 Out of sight,

## X.

— Must a little weep, Love,  
 Foolish me !  
 And so fall asleep, Love,  
 Loved by thee.

## MY STAR.

ALL that I know  
 Of a certain star,  
 Is, it can throw  
 (Like the angled spar)

Now a dart of red,  
 Now a dart of blue,  
 Till my friends have said  
 They would fain see, too,  
 My star that dartles the red and the blue !  
 Then it stops like a bird,—like a flower,  
 hangs furled,  
 They must solace themselves with the  
 Saturn above it.  
 What matter to me if their star is a  
 world ?  
 Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore  
 I love it.

## “CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME.”

*(See Edgar’s song in “Lear.”)*

### I.

My first thought was, he lied in every  
 word,  
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye  
 Askance to watch the working of his  
 lie  
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford  
 Suppression of the glee that pursed and  
 scored  
 Its edge at one more victim gained thereby.

## II.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?  
 What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare  
 All travellers that might find him posted  
 there,  
 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-  
 like laugh  
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my  
 epitaph  
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

## III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside  
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,  
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly  
 I did turn as he pointed; neither pride  
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,  
 So much as gladness that some end should  
 be.

## IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide wander-  
 ing,  
 What with my search drawn out thro'  
 years, my hope  
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope  
 With that obstreperous joy success would  
 bring,—  
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring  
 My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

## V.

As when a sick man very near to death  
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end  
The tears and takes the farewell of each  
friend  
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath  
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,  
"And the blow fall'n no grieving can  
amend").

## VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves  
Be room enough for this, and when a day  
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,  
With care about the banners, scarves and  
staves,  
And still the man hears all, and only craves  
He may not shame such tender love and  
stay.

## VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,  
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ  
So many times among "The Band"—to  
wit,  
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search  
addressed  
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed  
best,  
And all the doubt was now—should I  
be fit?

## VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,  
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway  
 Into the path he pointed. All the day  
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dim  
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one  
 grim  
 Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

## IX.

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found  
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,  
 Than pausing to throw backward a last  
 view  
 To the safe road, 'twas gone ! gray plain all  
 round !  
 Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.  
 I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

## X.

So on I went. I think I never saw  
 Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing  
 thrrove :  
 For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove !  
 But cockle, spurge, according to their law  
 Might propagate their kind, with none to  
 awe,  
 You'd think : a burr had been a treasure-  
 trove.

## XI.

No! penury, inertness, and grimace,  
 In some strange sort, were the land's  
 portion. "See  
 Or shut your eyes"—said Nature peevishly—  
 "It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:  
 The Judgment's fire alone can cure this place,  
 Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

## XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk  
 Above its mates, the head was chopped—  
 the bents  
 Were jealous else. What made those holes  
 and rents  
 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves—bruised  
 as to baulk  
 All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk  
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's  
 intents.

## XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair  
 In leprosy—thin dry blades pricked the  
 mud  
 Which underneath looked kneaded up with  
 blood.  
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,  
 Stood stupefied, however he came there—  
 Thrust out past service from the devil's  
 stud!

## XIV.

Alive? he might be dead for all I know,  
With that red gaunt and colloped neck  
a-strain,  
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane.  
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such  
woe:  
I never saw a brute I hated so—  
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

## xv.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.  
As a man calls for wine before he fights,  
I asked one draught of earlier, happier  
sights  
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.  
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's  
art :  
One taste of the old times sets all to rights !

## xvi.

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face  
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,  
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold  
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,  
That way he used. Alas ! one night's  
disgrace !  
Out went my heart's new fire and left it  
cold.

## XVII.

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there he stands

Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.

What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.

Good—but the scene shifts—faugh ! what hangman's hand

Pin to his breast a parchment ? his own bands

Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst !

## XVIII.

Better this present than a past like that—

Back therefore to my darkening path again.

No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.

Will the night send a howlet or a bat ?

I asked : when something on the dismal flat

Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

## XIX.

A sudden little river crossed my path

As unexpected as a serpent comes.

No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms—

This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath

For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the  
wrath  
Or its black eddy bespate with flakes  
and spumes.

## xx.

So petty yet so spiteful ! all along,  
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it ;  
Drenched willows flung them headlong in  
a fit  
Or mute despair, a suicidal throng :  
The river which had done them all the  
wrong,  
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred  
no whit.

## xxi.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how  
I feared  
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,  
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to  
seek  
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard !  
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,  
But, ugh ! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

## xxii.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.  
Now for a better country. Vain presage !  
Who were the strugglers, what war did  
they wage

Whose savage trample thus could pad the  
dank  
Soil to a splash? toads in a poisoned tank,  
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

## XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell  
cirque.

What kept them there, with all the plain  
to choose?

No foot-print leading to that horrid  
mews,

None out of it: mad brewage set to work  
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves  
the Turk

Pits for his pastime, Christians against  
Jews.

## XXIV.

And more than that—a furlong on—why,  
there!

What bad use was that engine for,  
that wheel,

Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to  
reel

Men's bodies out like silk? with all the  
air

Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,  
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of  
steel

## XXV.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once  
a wood,  
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now  
mere earth  
Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds  
mirth,  
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his  
mood  
Changes and off he goes !) within a rood  
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black  
dearth.

## XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and  
grim,  
Now patches where some leanness of the  
soil's  
Broke into moss or substances like boils ;  
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in  
him  
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim  
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

## XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end  
Nought in the distance but the evening,  
nought  
To point my footstep further ! At the  
thought,

A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,  
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned  
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide  
I sought.

## XXVIII.

For looking up, aware I somehow grew,  
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given  
place  
All round to mountains—with such name  
to grace  
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stol'n in  
view.  
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it,  
you !  
How to get from them was no plainer  
case.

## XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick  
Of mischief happened to me, God knows  
when—  
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended,  
then,  
Progress this way. When, in the very  
nick  
Of giving up, one time more, came a click  
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the  
den !

## XXX.

Burningly it came on me all at once,  
 This was the place ! those two hills on  
     the right  
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn  
     in fight—  
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . .  
     Dunce,  
 Fool, to be dozing at the very nonce,  
     After a life spent training for the sight !

## XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?  
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's  
     heart,  
 Built of brown stone, without a counter-  
     part  
 In the whole world. The tempest's mocking  
     elt  
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf  
     He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

## !

## XXXII.

Not see ? because of night perhaps ?—Why,  
     day  
 Came back again for that ! before it  
     left,  
 The dying sunset kindled through a  
     cleft :

The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay—  
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay.—  
“Now stab and end the creature—to the  
heft !”

## XXXIII.

Not hear? when noise was everywhere?  
it tolled  
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,  
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—  
How such a one was strong, and such was  
bold,  
And such was fortunate, yet each of old  
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe  
of years.

## XXXIV.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides  
—met  
To view the last of me, a living frame  
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame  
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet  
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set  
And blew. “*Childe Roland to the Dark  
Tower came.*”

## THE STATUE AND THE BUST.

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world  
knows well,  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
And this story of both do the townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,  
 At the farthest window facing the east  
 Asked, " Who rides by with the royal air ? "

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased ;  
 She leaned forth, one on either hand ;  
 They saw how the blush of the bride in-  
 creased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—  
 As one at each ear and both in a breath  
 Whispered, " The Great-Duke Ferdinand.

That selfsame instant, underneath,  
 The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
 Empty and fine like a swordless sheath

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
 Till he threw his head back—" Who is she ? "  
 —" A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps laid heavily  
 Over a pale brow spirit-pure—  
 Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—  
 Which vainly sought to dissemble her eyes  
 Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise  
 Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—  
 The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can ;  
She looked at him, as one who awakes,—  
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

As love so ordered for both their sakes,  
A feast was held that selfsame night  
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,  
But the Palace overshadows one,  
Because of a crime which may God requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was done,  
Through the first republic's murder there  
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)  
Turned in the midst of his multitude  
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood  
A single minute and no more,  
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—  
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,  
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word ?  
If a word did pass, which I do not think,  
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink  
He and his bride were alone at last  
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
That the door she had passed was shut on her  
Till the final catafalque repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,  
Through a certain window facing the east  
She might watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,  
And a feast might lead to so much beside,  
He, of many evils, chose the least. .

“ Freely I choose too,” said the bride—  
“ Your window and its world suffice.”  
So replied the tongue, while the heart re-  
plied—

“ If I spend the night with that devil twice,  
May his window serve as my loop of hell  
Whence a damned soul looks on Paradise !

“ I fly to the Duke who loves me well,  
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow ;  
Ere I count another ave-bell.

“ 'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,  
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,  
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow”—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)—  
“ My father tarries to bless my state :  
I must keep it one day more for him.

“ Is one day more so long to wait ?  
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know—  
We shall see each other, sure as fate.”

She turned on her side and slept. Just so !  
So we resolve on a thing and sleep.  
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, “ Dear or cheap  
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove  
To body or soul, I will drain it deep ! ”

And on the morrow, bold with love,  
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,  
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled “ 'Twas a very funeral  
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,  
A shame to efface, whate'er befall !

“ What if we break from the Arno bowers,  
And let Petraja, cool and green,  
Cure last night's fault with this morning's  
flowers ? ”

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen  
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,  
Said, “ Too much favour for me so mean !

"Alas! my lady leaves the south.  
Each wind that comes from the Apennine  
Is a menace to her tender youth."

"No way exists, the wise opine,  
If she quits her palace twice this year,  
To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.  
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring—  
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall  
bring  
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—  
Or am I the fool, and thou art his king?

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor coe!—  
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,  
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.  
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,  
With its hope of my lady's countenance—

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?  
And passing her palace, if I list,  
May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed  
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,  
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,  
No morrow's sun should arise and set  
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,  
With still fresh cause to wait one more  
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,  
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,  
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,  
But not in despite of heaven and earth—  
The rose would blow when the storm  
passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth  
By winter's fruits that supplant the rose :  
The world and its ways have a certain worth !

And to press a point while these oppose  
Were a simple policy—best wait,  
And lose no friends and gain no foes.

Meanwhile, worse fates than a lover's fate,  
Who daily may ride and lean and look  
Where his lady watches behind the grate !

And she--she watched the square like a book  
Holding one picture and only one,  
Which daily to find she undertook.

When the picture was reached the book was  
done,  
And she turned from it a night to scheme  
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

Weeks grew months, years—gleam by gleam  
The glory dropped from youth and love,  
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream,

Which hovered as dreams do, still above,  
But who can take a dream for truth?  
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth  
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked  
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—  
And wondered who the woman was,  
So hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—  
“Summon here,” she suddenly said,  
“Before the rest of my old self pass,

“Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,  
Who moulds the clay no love will change,  
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

“Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange  
Arrest the remains of young and fair,  
And rivet them while the seasons range

" Make me a face on the window there  
Waiting as ever, mute the while,  
My love to pass below in the square !

" And let me think that it may beguile  
Dreary days which the dead must spend  
Down in their darkness under the aisle—

" To say,—‘ What matters at the end ?  
I did no more while my heart was warm,  
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.’

" Where is the use of the lip's red charm,  
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,  
And the blood that blues the inside arm—

Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,  
The earthly gift to an end divine ?  
A lady of clay is as good, I trow,”

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine  
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,  
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(With, leaning out of a bright blue space,  
As a ghost might from a chink of sky  
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eyeing ever with earnest eye  
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,  
Some one who ever passes by—)

The Duke sighed like the simplest wretch  
In Florence, "So, my dream escapes !  
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle fashioner of shapes—  
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man  
Ere his body find the grave that gapes ?

"John of Douay shall work my plan,  
Mould me on horseback here aloft,  
Alive—(the subtle artisan !)

"In the very square I cross so oft !  
That men may admire, when future suns  
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow are brave  
in bronze—  
Admire and say, 'When he was alive,  
How he would take his pleasure once !'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive  
To listen meanwhile and laugh in my tomb  
At indolence which aspires to strive."

So ! while these wait the trump of doom,  
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,  
Nights and days in the narrow room ?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder  
What a gift life was, ages ago,  
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know,  
Nor all that chivalry of His,  
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—  
Since, the end of life being manifest,  
He had cut his way thro' the world to  
this.

I hear your reproach—"But delay was best,  
For their end was a crime!"—Oh, a crime  
will do  
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,  
Sufficient to vindicate itself  
And prove its worth at a moment's view.

Must a game be played for the sake  
pelf?

Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram  
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham.  
As well the counter as coin, I submit,  
When your table's a hat, and your prize, a  
dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,  
Venture as truly, use the same skill,  
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play—is my principle !  
 Let a man contend to the uttermost  
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will !

The counter our lovers staked was lost  
 As surely as if it were lawful coin :  
 And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Was, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,  
 Though the end in sight was a crime, I say.  
 You of the virtue, (we issue join)  
 How strive you ? *De te, fabula !*

## OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.

### I.

THE morn when first it thunders in March,  
 The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.  
 As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch  
 Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,  
 No flash snapt, no dumb thunder rolled  
 In the valley beneath, where, white and wide,  
 Washed by the morning's water-gold,  
 Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

### II.

River and bridge and street and square  
 Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,  
 Through the live translucent bath of air,  
 As the sights in a magic crystal ball.

And of all I saw and of all I praised,  
The most to praise and the best to see,  
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised  
But why did it more than startle me?

## III.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,  
Could you play me false who loved you so?  
Some slights if a certain heart endures  
It feels, I would have your fellows know!  
'Faith—I perceive not why I should care  
To break a silence that suits them best,  
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear  
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

## IV.

On the arch where olives overhead  
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,  
(That sharp-curled leaf they never shed)  
'Twixt the aloes I used to lean in chief,  
And mark through the winter afternoons,  
By a gift God grants me now and then,  
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,  
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

## V.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go  
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—  
My business was hardly with them, I trow,  
But with empty cells of the human hive;

—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,  
 The church's apsis, aisle or nave,  
 Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch—  
 Its face set full for the sun to shave.

## VI.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,  
 Wherever an outline weakens and wanes  
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,  
 Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick  
 pains !  
 One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,  
 Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,  
 —A lion who dies of an ass's kick,  
 The wronged great soul of an ancient  
 Master.

## VII.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !  
 They are safe in heaven with their backs  
 to it,  
 The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz  
 Round the works of, you of the little wit !  
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope  
 Now that they see God face to face,  
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope ?  
 'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

## VIII.

Much they reck of your praise and you !  
 But the wronged great souls—can they be  
 quit

Or a world where all their work is to do,  
 Where you style them, you of the little wit,  
 Old Master this and Early the other,  
 Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,  
 That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,  
 Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

## IX.

And here where your praise would yield  
 returns  
 And a handsome word or two give help,  
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns  
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.  
 What, not a word for Stefano there  
 —Of how once prominent and starry,  
 Called Nature's ape and the world's despair  
 For his peerless painting (see Vasari)?

## X.

There he stands now. Study, my friends,  
 What a man's work comes to! so he  
 plans it,  
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends  
 For the toiling and moiling, and there's its  
 transit!  
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,  
 With upturned eye while the band is busy,  
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their  
 neighbour!  
 'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.

## XI.

If you knew their work you would deal your  
dole,

May I take upon me to instruct you ?  
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,  
Thus much had the world to boast *in  
fructu*—

The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,  
Which the actual generations garble,  
Was re-uttered,—and Soul (which Limbs  
betoken)  
And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new  
in marble.

## XII.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,  
As you might have been, as you cannot be ;  
And bringing your own shortcomings there,  
You grew content in your poor degree  
With your little power, by those statues'  
godhead,  
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,  
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,  
And your little dates, by their forms that  
stay.

## XIII.

You would fain be kinglier, say than I am ?  
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.  
You'd fain be a model ? the Son of Priam  
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees'  
use.

You're wroth—can you slay your snake like  
Apollo?

You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!  
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow—  
You die—there's the dying Alexander.

## xiv.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,  
Your meagre charms by their rounded  
beauty,  
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,  
You learn—to submit is the worsted's duty.  
—When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,  
The collective, I mean—the race of Man  
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,  
And grow here according to God's own  
plan.

## xv.

Growth came when, looking your last on  
them all,  
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine  
day  
And cried with a start—What if we so small  
Are greater, ay, greater the while than  
they!  
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of  
stature?  
In both, of such lower types are we  
Precisely because of our wider nature;  
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

## XVI.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,  
 It seethes with the morrow for us and more.  
 They are perfect—how else? they shall never  
     change:  
 We are faulty—why not? we have time in  
     store.  
 The Artificer's hand is not arrested  
     With us—we are rough-hewn, nowise  
     polished:  
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested  
     With all they can teach, we shall see them  
     abolished.

## XVII.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—  
     The better! what's come to perfection  
     perishes.  
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise in  
     heaven.  
 Works done least rapidly, Art most  
     cherishes.  
 Thyselv shall afford the example, Giotto!  
     Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,  
 Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"  
     Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

## XVIII.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,  
     And what—is depending on life's one  
     minute?

Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter  
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it?  
 And Man, this step within his endeavour,  
 His face, have no more play and action  
 Than joy which is crystallised for ever,  
 Or grief, an eternal petrifaction !

## XIX.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,  
 To cries of "Greek Art and what more  
 wish you?"—  
 Replied " Become now self-acquainters,  
 And paint man, man,—whatever the issue !  
 Make the hopes shine through the flesh they  
 fray,  
 New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.  
 So bring the invisible full into play,  
 Let the visible go to the dogs—what  
 matters?"

## xx

Give these, I say, full honour and glory  
 For daring so much, before they well did it,  
 The first of the new, in our race's story,  
 Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.  
 The worthies began a revolution  
 Which if on the earth we intend to  
 acknowledge  
 Honour them now—(ends my allocution)  
 Nor confer our degree when the folks leave  
 college.

## XXI.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—  
 That, when this life is ended, begins  
 New work for the soul in another state,  
 Where it strives and gets weary, loses and  
 wins—  
 Where the strong and the weak, this world's  
 congeries,  
 Repeat in large what they practised in small,  
 Through life after life in unlimited series ;  
 Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

## XXII.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen  
 By the means of Evil that Good is best,  
 And through earth and its noise, what is  
 heaven's serene,—  
 When its faith in the same has stood the  
 test—  
 Why, the child grown man, you burn the  
 rod,  
 The uses of labour are surely done.  
 There remaineth a rest for the people of God,  
 And I have had troubles enough for one.

## XXIII.

But at any rate I have loved the season  
 Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy ;  
 My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,  
 My painter—who but Cimabue ?

Nor ever was man of them all indeed,  
 From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,  
 Could say that he missed my critic-meed.  
 So now to my special grievance—heigh-ho!

## xxiv.

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,  
 Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,  
 Blocked up, knocked out, or white-washed o'er  
 —No getting again what the church has  
 grasped!  
 The works on the wall must take their  
 chance,  
 “Works never conceded to England's  
 thick clime!”  
 (I hope they prefer their inheritance  
 Of a bucketful of Italian quick lime.)

## xxv.

When they go at length, with such a shaking  
 Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly  
 Each master his way through the black  
 streets taking,  
 Where many a lost work breathes though  
 badly—  
 Why don't they bethink them of who has  
 merited?  
 Why not reveal, while their pictures dree  
 Such doom, that a captive's to be out-  
 ferreted?  
 Why do they never remember me?

## XXVI.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi  
 Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;  
 Nor wrunged Lippino—and not a word I  
 Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.  
 But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,  
 To grant me a taste of your intonaco—  
 Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a  
 sad eye ?  
 No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco ?

## XXVII.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,  
 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,  
 Save me a sample, give me the hap  
 Of a muscular Christ that shows the  
 draughtsman ?  
 No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,  
 Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—  
 Could not Alessio Baldovinetti  
 Contribute so much, I ask him humbly ?

## XXVIII.

Margheritone of Arezzo,  
 With the grove-clothes garb and swaddling  
 barret,  
 (Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,  
 You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot ?)  
 No poor glimmering Crucifixion,  
 Where in the foreground kneels the donor ?  
 If such remain, as is my conviction,  
 The hoarding does you but little honour.

## XXIX.

They pass : for them the panels may thrill,  
 The tempera grow alive and tinglish—  
 Rot or are left to the mercies still  
 Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the  
 English !  
 Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,  
 Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno  
 At naked Art, and in ecstasies  
 Before some clay-cold vile Carlino !

## XXX.

No matter for these ! But Giotto, you,  
 Have you allowed as the town-tongues  
 babble it,  
 Never ! it shall not be counted true—  
 That a certain precious little tablet  
 Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—  
 Buried so long in oblivion's womb,  
 Was left for another than I to discover—  
 Turns up at last, and to whom ?—to whom ?

## XXXI.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,  
 (Or was it rather the Ognissanti ?)  
 Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary  
 too !  
 Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti !*  
 My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)  
 Jewel of Gtamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye !  
 So, in anticipative gratitude,  
 What if I take up my hope and prophesy ?

## XXXII.

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard  
    Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,  
To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,  
    Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,  
None of that shooting the sky (blank  
    cartridge),  
No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,  
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge  
    Over Morello with squib and cracker.

## XXXIII.

We'll shoot this time better game and bag  
    'ein hot—  
No display at the stone of Dante,  
But a kind of Witan-agemot  
    ("Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)  
To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,  
    How Art may return that departed with her.  
Go, hated house, go each trace of the  
    Lorraine's!  
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

## XXXIV.

How we shall prologueise, how we shall  
    perorate,  
Say fit things upon art and history—  
Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a  
    zero rate,  
Make of the want of the age no mystery !

Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,  
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks  
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—  
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's !

## XXXV.

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt  
'Tuscan,  
Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo*,")  
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,  
Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.  
And fine as the beak of a young 'beccaccia  
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,  
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,  
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

## XXXVI.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold  
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire  
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled  
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the  
spire—  
As, "God and the People" plain for its  
motto,  
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky ?  
Foresceing the day that vindicates Giotto  
And Florence together, the first am I !

## BY THE FIRESIDE.

## I.

How well I know what I mean to do  
When the long dark Autumn evenings  
come,  
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?  
With the music of all thy voices, dumb  
In life's November too!

## II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,  
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,  
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind  
blows,  
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,  
Not verse now, only prose !

## III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,  
"There he is at it, deep in Greek—  
Now or never, then, out we slip  
To cut from the hazels by the creek  
A mainmast for our ship."

## IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends !  
Greek puts already on either side  
Such a branch-work forth, as soon extends

To a vista opening far and wide,  
And I pass out where it ends.

## v.

The outside frame like your hazel-trees—  
But the inside-archway narrows fast,  
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,  
And we slope to Italy at last  
And youth, by green degrees.

## vi.

I follow wherever I am led,  
Knowing so well the leader's hand—  
Oh, woman-country, wooed, not wed,  
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,  
Laid to their hearts instead !

## vii.

Look at the ruined chapel again  
Half way up in the Alpine gorge.  
Is that a tower, I point you plain,  
Or is it a mill or an iron forge  
Breaks solitude in vain ?

## viii.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;  
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;  
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,  
The thread of water single and slim,  
Thro' the ravage some torrent brings !

## IX.

Does it feed the little lake below ?  
That speck of white just on its marge  
Is Pella : see, in the evening glow,  
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge  
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

## X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;  
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it  
By boulder-stones where lichens mock  
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit  
Their teeth to the polished block.

## XI.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain flowers,  
And the thorny balls, each three in one,  
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers,  
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun  
These early November hours—

## XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across  
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,  
O'er a shield, else gold from rim to boss,  
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped  
Elf-needed mat of moss,

## XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged  
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew

Yon sudden coral nipple bulged  
 Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew  
 Of toad-stools peep indulged.

## xiv.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge  
 That takes the turn to a range beyond,  
 Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge  
 Where the water is stopped in a stagnant  
 pond  
 Danced over by the midge. . . .

## xv.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,  
 Blackish gray and mostly wet ;  
 Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.  
 See here again, how the lichens fret  
 And the roots of the ivy strike !

## xvi.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes  
 On a festa-day, if he comes at all,  
 To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,  
 Gathered within that precinct small  
 By the dozen ways one roams

## xvii.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,  
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,  
 Leave the grange where the woodman stores  
 his nuts,

Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread  
Their gear on the rock's bare iuts.

## XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,  
With its bit of fresco half-moonwise  
Set over the porch, art's early wont—  
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,  
But has borne the weather's brunt—

## XIX.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,  
For a pent-house properly projects  
Where three carved beams make a certain  
show,  
Dating—good thought of our architect's—  
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

## XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,  
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond attimes:  
The place is silent and aware :  
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,  
But that is its own affair.

## XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,  
Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,  
Whom else could I dare look backward for,  
With whom beside should I dare pursue  
The path gray heads abhor ?

## XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;  
 Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—  
 Not they ; age threatens and they contemn,  
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,  
 One inch from our life's safe hem !

## XXIII.

With me, youth led—I will speak now,  
 No longer watch you as you sit  
 Reading by fire-light, that great brow  
 And the spirit-small hand propping it  
 Mutely—my heart knows how—

## XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,  
 You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme ;  
 And you, too, find without a rebuff  
 The response your soul seeks many a time  
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff—

## XXV.

My own, confirm me ! If I tread  
 This path back, is it not in pride  
 To think how little I dreamed it led  
 To an age so blest that by its side  
 Youth seems the waste instead !

## XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct !  
 At first, 'twas something our two souls

Should mix as mists do : each is sucked  
 Into each now ; on, the new stream rolls,  
 Whatever rocks obstruct.

## XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands  
 The great Word which makes all things  
 new—

When earth breaks up and Heaven expands—  
 How will the change strike me and you  
 In the House not made with hands ?

## XXVIII.

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,  
 Your heart anticipate my heart, .  
 You must be just before, in fine,  
 See and make me see, for your part,  
 New depths of the Divine !

## XXIX.

But who could have expected this,  
 When we two drew together first  
 Just for the obvious human bliss,  
 To satisfy life's daily thirst  
 With a thing men seldom miss ?

## XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,  
 Let us lean and love it over again—  
 Let us now forget and then recall,  
 Break the rosary in a pearly rain,  
 And gather what we let fall !

## XXXI.

What did I say?—that a small bird sings  
 All day long, save when a brown pair  
 Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings  
 Strained to a bell: 'gainst the noonday glare  
 You count the streaks and rings.

## XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve  
 'Tis better; then the silence grows  
 To that degree, you half believe  
 It must get rid of what it knows,  
 Its bosom does so heave.

## XXXIII.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,  
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,  
 And still I questioned or replied  
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,  
 Lay choking in its pride.

## XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,  
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,  
 And care about the fresco's loss,  
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,  
 And wonder at the moss.

## XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under—  
 Look through the window's grated square:

Nothing to see ! for fear of plunder,  
 The cross is down and the altar bare,  
 As if thieves don't fear thunder.

## XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate,  
 See the little porch and rustic door,  
 Read duly the dead builder's date,  
 Then cross the bridge we crossed before,  
 Take the path again—but wait !

## XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite !  
 The water slips o'er stock and stone ;  
 The west is tender, hardly bright.  
 How gray at once is the evening grown.  
 One star, the chrysolite !

XXXVII<sub>4</sub>

We two stood there with never a third,  
 But each by each, as each knew well.  
 The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,  
 The lights and the shades made up a spell  
 Till the trouble grew and stirred.

## XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !  
 And the little less, and what worlds away !  
 How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,  
 Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,  
 And life be a proof of this !

## XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen  
 So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her.

## L.

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,  
It forwards the General Deed of Man,  
And each of the Many helps to recruit  
The life of the race by a general plan,  
Each living his own, to boot.

## LI.

I am named and known by that hour's feat,  
There took my station and degree.  
So grew my own small life complete  
As nature obtained her best of me—  
One born to love you, sweet !

## LII.

And to watch you sink by the fireside now  
Back again, as you mutely sit  
Musing by the fire-light, that great brow  
And the spirit-small hand propping it  
Yonder, my heart knows how !

## LIII.

So the earth has gained by one man more,  
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's  
gain too,  
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er  
When the autumn comes : which I mean  
to do  
One day, as I said before.





"A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,  
Sailed past."

## TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.

## I.

I WONDER do you feel to-day  
 As I have felt, since, hand in hand,  
 We sat down on the grass, to stray  
 In spirit better through the land,  
 This morn of Rome and May?

## II.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
 Has tantalised me many times,  
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes  
 To catch at and let go.

## III.

Help me to hold it: first it left  
 The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
 There, branching from the brick-work's cleft,  
 Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed  
 Took up the floating weft.

## IV.

Where one small orange cup amassed  
 Five beetles,—blind and green they grope

## EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

## FAME.

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,  
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime ;  
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the  
sods  
Have struggled thro' its binding osier-rods ;  
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean  
awry,  
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by ;  
How the minute gray lichens, plate o'er  
plate,  
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and  
date !

## LOVE.

So, the year's done with !  
*(Love me for ever !)*  
All March begun with,  
April's endeavour ;  
May-wreaths that bound me  
June needs must sever !  
Now snows fall round me,  
Quenching June's fever—  
*(Love me for ever !)*

## A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

## A TRAGEDY.

## PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.

GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.

THOROLD, Lord Tresham

AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.

GERARD.

Other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S Park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his Mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flagons, &c.*

*1st Ret.* Ay—do—push, friends, and then you'll push down me.

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot.

Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's  
cry

Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant ?  
But there's no breeding in a man of you  
Save Gerard yonder : here's a half-place yet,  
Old Gerard !

*Ger.* Save your courtesies, my friend.  
Here is my place.

*2nd Ret.* Now, Gerard, out with it !  
What makes you sullen, this of all the days  
I' the year ? To-day that, young, rich,  
bountiful,  
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they  
match  
With our Lord Tresham thro' the country-  
side,  
Is coming here in utmost bravery  
To ask our Master's Sister's hand ?

*Ger.* What then ?  
*2nd Ret.* What then ? Why, you she  
speaks to, if she meets.  
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart  
The boughs to let her thro' her forest walks,  
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,  
You've heard, these three days, how Earl  
Mertoun sues  
To lay his heart, and house, and broad  
lands too,  
At Lady Mildred's feet — and while we  
squeeze  
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss

One congee of the least page in his train,  
 You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl,"  
 say I—

"What then," say you!

*3rd Ret.* I'll wager he has let  
 Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred,  
 swim

Over the falls and gain the river!

*Ger.* Ralph,

Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day  
 For you and for your hawks?

*4th Ret.* Let Gerard be!  
 He's coarse-grained, like his carved black  
 cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him,  
 look!

Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,  
 To purpose?

*1st Ret.* Our retainers look as fine—  
 That's comfort! Lord, how Richard holds  
 himself

With his white staff! Will not a knave  
 behind

Prick him upright?

*4th Ret.* He's only bowing, fool!  
 The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

*1st Ret.* That's comfort. Here's a very  
 cavalcade!

*3rd Ret.* I don't see wherefore Richard,  
 and his troop

Of silk and silver varlets there, should find

Their perfumed selves so indispensable  
On high days, holy-days ! Would it so  
disgrace

Our Family, if I, for instance, stood—  
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,  
A leash of greyhounds in my left ?—

*Ger.* —With Hugh  
The logman for supporter—in his right  
The bill-hook—in his left the brushwood-  
shears !

*3rd Ret.* Out on you, crab ! What next,  
what next ? The Earl !

*1st Ret.* Oh, Walter, groom, our horses,  
do they match

The Earl's ? Alas, that first pair of the  
six—

They paw the ground—Ah, Walter ! and  
that brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel !

*6th Ret.* Ay—Ay !  
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,  
At soups and sauces—what's a horse to  
you ?

D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the  
midst

So cunningly ?—then, Philip, mark this  
further ;

No leg has he to stand on !

*1st Ret.* No ? That's comfort.

*2nd Ret.* Peace, Cook ! The Earl de-  
scends.—Well, Gerard, see

The Earl at least ! Come, there's a proper  
man,  
I hope ! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or  
Swede,  
Has got a starrier eye—

*3rd Ret.* His eyes are blue—  
But leave my hawks alone !

*4th Ret.* So young, and yet  
So tall and shapely !

*5th Ret.* Here's Lord Tresham's self !  
There now—there's what a nobleman should  
be !

He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like  
A House's Head !

*2nd Ret.* But you'd not have a boy  
—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too  
soon

That stateliness ?

*1st Ret.* Our Master takes his hand—  
Richard and his white staff are on the  
move—

Back fall our people—(tsh !—there's Timothy  
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—  
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off !)  
—At last I see our Lord's back and his  
friend's—

And the whole beautiful bright company  
Close round them—in they go !

[*Jumping down from the window-bench,  
and making for the table and its jugs,  
&c.]* Good health, long life,

Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his  
House !

*6th Ret.* My father drove his father first to  
court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he !

*2nd Ret.* God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl !  
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker !

*Ger.* Drink, my boys :  
Don't mind me—all's not right about me—  
drink !

*2nd Ret. [Aside.]* He's vexed, now, that  
he let the show escape !

[To GER.] Remember that the Earl returns  
this way—

*Ger.* That way ?

*2nd Ret.* Just so.

*Ger.* Then my way's here. [Goes.

*2nd Ret.* Old Gerard  
Will die soon—mind, I said it ! He was  
used

To care about the pitifullest thing  
That touched the House's honour, not an eye  
But his could see wherein—and on a cause  
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard  
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away  
In cares that this was right, nor that was  
wrong,

Such a point decorous, and such by rule—  
(He knew such niceties, no herald more)  
And now—you see his humour : die he will !

*2nd Ret.* God help him ! Who's for the  
great servants' hall  
To hear what's going on inside ! They'd  
follow  
Lord Tresham into the saloon.

*3rd Ret.* I !—

*4th Ret.* I !—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,  
Some hint of how the parley goes inside !  
Prosperity to the great House once more—  
Here's the last drop !

*1st Ret.* Have at you. Boys,  
hurrah !

### SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

*Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN ;  
AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.*

*Tresh.* I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet  
once more  
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name  
—Noble among the noblest in itself,  
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,  
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you  
wear,  
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,  
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last  
lord,  
Seems to re-kindled at the core)—your name  
Would win you welcome !—

*Mer.***Thanks!***Tresh.*

—But add to that,

The worthiness and grace and dignity  
Of your proposal for uniting both  
Our Houses even closer than respect  
Unites them now—add these, and you must  
grant  
One favour more, nor that the least,—to  
think  
The welcome I should give;—'tis given!  
My lord,  
My only brother, Austin—he's the King's.  
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed  
To Austin: all are yours.

*Mer.* I thank you—less  
For the expressed commendings which your  
seal,  
And only that, authenticates—forbids  
My putting from me . . . to my heart I  
take  
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my  
gratitude,  
Than the indulgent insight it implies  
Of what must needs be uppermost with one  
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave  
to ask,  
**In** weighed and measured unimpassioned  
words,  
A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,  
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,  
Despair within his soul :—that I dare ask

Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence  
 That gift, I have to thank you.—Yes, Lord  
 Tresham,  
 I love your sister—as you'd have one love  
 That lady . . . oh more, more I love her !  
 Wealth,  
 Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they're yours,  
 you know,  
 To hold or part with, at your choice—but  
 grant

My true self, *me* without a rood of land,  
 A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,  
 Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death  
 or life ?

*Guen.* [Apart to Aus.] Why, this is  
 loving, Austin !

*Aus.* He's so young !

*Guen.* Young ? Old enough, I think, to  
 half surmise  
 He never had obtained an entrance here,  
 Were all this fear and trembling needed.

*Aus.* Hush !

He reddens.

*Guen.* Mark him, Austin ; that's  
 true love !

Ours must begin again.

*Tresh.* We'll sit, my lord.  
 Ever with best desert goes diffidence.  
 I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.  
 That I am wholly satisfied with you  
 On this occasion, when a falcon's eye

Were dull compared with mine to search out  
faults,  
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give  
Or to refuse.

*Mer.* But you, you grant my suit?  
I have your word if hers?

*Tresh.* My best of words  
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.  
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?

*Mer.* I . . . I . . . our two demesnes,  
remember, touch—  
I have been used to wander carelessly  
After my stricken game—the heron roused  
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken  
wing  
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—  
or else

Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight  
And lured me after her from tree to tree,  
I marked not whither . . . I have come  
upon

The Lady's wondrous beauty unaware,  
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

*Guen.* [Aside to Aus.] Note that mode  
Of faltering out that when a lady passed  
He, having eyes, did see her! You had  
said—

“On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;  
“Observed a red, where red should not have  
been,  
“Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough

"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk  
Be lessoned for the future !

*Tresh.* What's to say  
May be said briefly. She has never known  
A mother's care ; I stand for father too.  
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—  
You cannot know the good and tender heart,  
Its girl's trust, and its woman's constancy,  
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,  
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free  
As light where friends are—how embued  
with lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet  
The . . . one might know I talked of  
Mildred—thus  
We brothers talk !

*Mer.* I thank you.

*Tresh.* In a word,  
Control's not for this lady ; but her wish  
To please me outstrips in its subtlety  
My power of being pleased—herself creates  
The want she means to satisfy. My heart  
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.  
Can I say more ?

*Mer.* No more—thanks, thanks—  
no more !

*Tresh.* This matter then discussed . . .

*Mer.* . . . We'll waste no breath  
On aught less precious—I'm beneath the roof  
That holds her : while I thought of that, my  
speech

To you would wander—as it must not do,  
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.  
I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

*Tresh.* With less regret 'tis suffered, that  
again  
We meet, I hope, so shortly.

*Mer.* We? again?—  
Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you  
will crown  
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me  
When . . . if . . . the Lady will appoint  
a day  
For me to wait on you—and her.

*Tresh.* So soon  
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts  
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—  
A messenger shall bring you the result.

*Mer.* You cannot bind me more to you,  
my lord.  
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew  
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

*Tresh.* So may it prove !

*Mer.* You, Lady, you, Sir, take  
My humble salutation

*Guen. and Aus.* Thanks !

*Tresh.* Within there !  
[Servants enter. TRESHAM conducts  
MERTOUN to the door. Meantime AUSTIN  
remarks,

Well,  
Here I have an advantage of the Earl,

Confess now ! I'd not think that all was  
safe

Because my lady's brother stood my friend.  
Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say,  
yes—

"She'll not say, no"—what comes it to  
beside ?

*I* should have prayed the brother, "speak  
this speech,

"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—  
put in this—

"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other  
thing,—

"Then set down what she says, and how she  
looks,

"And if she smiles," and (in an under  
breath)

"Only let her accept me, and do you

"And all the world refuse me, if you dare !"  
*Guen.* That way you'd take, friend

Austin ? What a shame

I was your cousin tamely from the first  
Your bride, and all this fervour's run to  
waste !

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day ?  
The Earl's a fool.

*Aus.* Here's Thorold. Tell him so !

*Tresh.* [Returning.] Now, voices, voices !  
'St ! the lady's first !

How seems he?—seems he not . . . come,  
faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage !  
Down with fraud—up with faith ! How  
seems the Earl ?

A name ! a blazon ! if you knew their worth,  
As you will never ! come—the Earl ?

*Guen.* He's young.

*Tresh.* What's she? an infant save in heart  
and brain.

Young ! Mildred is fourteen, remark ! And  
you . . .

Austin, how old is she ?

*Guen.* There's tact for you !  
I meant that being young was good excuse  
If one should tax him . . .

*Tresh.* Well?

*Guen.* —With lacking wit.

*Tresh.* He lacked wit ? Where might he  
lack wit, so please you ?

*Guen.* In standing straighter than the  
steward's rod  
And making you the tiresomest harangues,  
Instead of slipping over to my side  
And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet  
lady,

" Your cousin there will do me detriment  
" He little dreams of—he's absorbed, I see,  
" In my old name and fame—be sure he'll  
leave

" My Mildred, when his best account of me  
" Is ended, in full confidence I wear

" My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness vouch-safes" . . .

*Tresh.* . . . "To give a best of best accounts, yourself,

"Of me and my demerits." You are right !  
He should have said what now I say for him.  
You golden creature, will you help us all ?  
Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but  
you

—You are . . . what Austin only knows !

Come up,

All three of us—she's in the Library  
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast.  
Precede !

*Guen.* Austin, how we must—!

*Tresh.* Must what ? Must speak truth,  
Malignant tongue ! Detect one fault in him !  
I challenge you !

*Guen.* Witchcraft's a fault in him,  
For you're bewitched.

*Tresh.* What's urgent we obtain  
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—

Next day at farthest.

*Guen.* Ne'er instruct me !

*Tresh.* Come !

—He's out of your good graces since  
forsooth,

He stood not as he'd carry us by storm  
With his perfections ! You're for the  
composed,

Manly, assured, becoming confidence!  
—Get her to say, “to-morrow,” and  
I’ll give you . . .  
I’ll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled  
With petting and snail-paces. Will you?  
Come!

**SCENE III.—MILDRED'S Chamber.** *A painted window overlooks the park.* MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

*Guen.* Now, Mildred, spare those pains.  
I have not left  
Our talkers in the Library, and climbed  
The wearisome ascent to this your bower  
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .  
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you  
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,  
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell—  
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most  
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,  
He would maintain, were gray instead of  
blue—

I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,  
I have not done such things, (all to deserve  
A minute's quiet cousin's-talk with you,)  
To be dismissed so coolly!

*Mil.* Guendolen,  
What have I done . . . what could suggest . . .

*Guen.*                  There, there !  
 Do I not comprehend you'd be alone  
 To throw those testimonies in a heap,  
 Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,  
 With that poor, silly, heartless Guendolen's  
 Ill-timed, misplaced, attempted smartnesses—  
 And sift their sense out? now, I come to  
 spare you  
 Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and  
 have !  
 Demand, be answered ! Lack I ears and  
 eyes ?  
 Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table  
 The Conqueror dined on when he landed  
 first,  
 Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—  
 The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great  
 meed ?  
 Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes !

*Mil.*                  My brother—  
 Did he . . . you said that he received him  
 well ?  
*Guen.* If I said only "well" I said not  
 much—

Oh, stay—which brother ?

*Mil.*                  Thorold ! whc—who else ?  
*Guen.* Thorold (a secret) is too proud by  
 half,—  
 Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler  
 Than we are with our birds. Of this great  
 House

The least retainer that e'er caught his glance  
 Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk :  
 And in the world, the court, if men would cite  
 The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name  
 Rises of its clear nature to their lips :  
 But he should take men's homage, trust in it,  
 And care no more about what drew it down.  
 He has desert, and that, acknowledgment ;  
 Is he content ?

*Mil.* You wrong him, Guendolen.

*Guen.* He's proud, confess ; so proud with  
 brooding o'er  
 The light of his interminable line,  
 An ancestry with men all paladins,  
 And women all . . .

*Mil.* Dear Guendolen, 'tis late !  
 When yonder purple pane the climbing moon  
 Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

*Guen.* Well, that Thorold  
 Should rise up from such musings and receive  
 One come audaciously to graft himself  
 Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,  
 No slightest spot in such an one. . . .

*Mil.* Who finds  
 A spot in Mertoun ?

*Guen.* Not your brother ; there-  
 fore,  
 Not the whole world.

*Mil.* I'm weary, Guendolen.—  
 Bear with me !

*Guen.* I am foolish.

*Guen.* Good night and rest to you.  
I said how gracefally his mantle lay  
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

*Mil.* Brown hair!

*Guen.* Brown? why it *is* brown—how could you know that?

*Mil.* How? did not you—Oh, Austin  
'twas, declared  
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—  
and, look,

The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber !  
Sweet,  
Good night !

*Guen.* Forgive me—sleep the soundlier  
for me!

[Going, she turns suddenly.

Mildred !

Perdition! all's discovered.—Thorold finds  
—That the Earl's greatest of all grand-  
mothers

Was grander daughter still—to that fair  
dame

Whose garter slipped down at the famous  
dance ! [Goes.

*Mil.* Is she—can she be really gone at last?

My heart—I shall not reach the window!  
Needs

**Must I have sinned much, so to suffer !**

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.* There !

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with consent  
Of all the world and Thorold,—Mertoun's  
bride !

Too late ! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter  
still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up  
The curse of the beginning ; but I know  
It comes too late—'twill sweetest be of all  
To dream my soul away and die upon !

[*A noise without.*

The voice ! Oh ! why, why glided sin the  
snake

Into the Paradise Heaven meant us both ?

[*The window opens softly.—A low voice sings.*

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer  
than the purest ;

And her noble heart's the noblest, yes, and her  
sure faith's the surest :

And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on  
depth of lustre

Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier  
than the wild-grape cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-  
misted marble :

Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling,  
the bird's warble !

[*A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the  
window*

And this woman says, " My days were sunless and  
 my nights were moonless,  
 " Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's  
 heart's outbreak tuneless,  
 " If you loved me not ! " And I who—(ah, for words  
 of flame !) adore her!  
 Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably  
 before her—

*[He enters—approaches her seat, and bends over her.]*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice  
 takes me,  
 And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as  
 hers she makes me !

*[The Earl throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.]*

My very heart sings, so I sing, beloved !  
*Mil.* Sit, Henry—do not take my hand.  
*Mer.* 'Tis mine !  
 The meeting that appalled us both so much  
 Is ended.

*Mil.* What begins now ?

*Mer.* Happiness  
 Such as the world contains not.

*Mil.* That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed  
 The whole world's best of blisses : we—do  
 we

Deserve that ? Utter to your soul, what  
 mine

Long since, beloved, has grown used to hear,  
 Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,

And so familiar now ; this will not be !

*Mer.* Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face,  
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,  
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside  
The truth, as what had e'er prevailed on me  
Save you, to venture ? Have I gained at last

Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,  
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too ?

Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break  
On the strange unrest of our night, confused  
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see  
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops  
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,  
And no expressless glory in the east ?

When I am by you, to be ever by you,  
When I have won you and may worship you,  
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be ?"

*Mil.* Sin has surprised us ; so will punishment.

*Mer.* No—me alone, who sinned alone !

*Mil.* The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm  
Throughout to you then, Henry ?

*Mer.* Of your life  
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste  
A thought about when you are by me ?—  
you

It was, I said my folly called the storm

And pulled the night upon.—'Twas day  
with me—

Perpetual dawn with me.

*Mil.* Come what, come will,  
You have been happy—take my hand !

*Mer. [After a pause.]* How good  
Your brother is ! I figured him a cold—  
Shall I say, haughty man ?

*Mil.* They told me all.  
I know all.

*Mer.* It will soon be over.

*Mil.* Over ?  
Oh, what is over ? what must I live thro'  
And say, "'tis over ?" Is our meeting over ?  
Have I received in presence of them all  
The partner of my guilty love,—with brow  
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips  
Which make believe that when they strive  
to form

Replies to you and tremble as they strive,  
It is the nearest ever they approached  
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's  
. . . lip—

With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that  
*is* . . .

Ah, God ! some prodigy of thine will stop  
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness  
In its birth even—some fierce leprous spot  
Will mar the brows dissimulating—I  
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by  
heart,

But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful  
story,  
The love, the shame, and the despair—with  
them  
Round me aghast as men round some cursed  
fount  
That should spirt water, and spouts blood.  
I'll not  
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should  
draw  
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace  
That's gone from me—gone once, and gone  
for ever!

*Mer.* Mildred, my honour is your own.  
I'll share  
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.  
A word informs your brother I retract  
This morning's offer; time will yet bring  
forth

Some better way of saving both of us.

*Mil.* I'll meet their faces, Mertoun!

*Mer.* When? to-morrow  
Get done with it!

*Mil.* Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!  
Next day! I never shall prepare my words  
And looks and gestures sooner!—How you  
must

Despise me!

*Mer.* Mildred, break it if you choose,  
A heart the love of you uplifted—still  
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,

To Heaven ! but, Mildred, answer me,—first  
pace

The chamber with me—once again—now, say  
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me  
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)  
—Contempt for you in ! I would pluck it off  
And cast it from me !—but no—no, you'll  
not

Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat  
that?

*Mil.* Dear Henry—

*Mer.* I was scarce a boy—  
e'en now

What am I more? And you were infantine  
When first I met you—why, your hair fell  
loose

On either side!—my fool's cheek reddens  
now

Only in the recalling how it burned  
That morn to see the shape of many a dream  
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms  
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,  
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to  
her,

Might speak to her, might live and die her  
own,

Who knew?—I spoke—Oh, Mildred, feel  
you not

That now, while I remember every glance  
Of yours, each word of yours, with power  
to test

And weigh them in the diamond scales of  
Pride,  
Resolved the treasure of a first and last  
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its  
worth,

—That now I think upon your purity  
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own  
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised  
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk  
A silly language, but interpret, you !)  
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason  
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,  
If you had pity on my passion, pity  
On my protested sickness of the soul  
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and  
watch

Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you  
Accorded gifts and knew not they were  
gifts—

If I grew mad at last with enterprise  
And must behold my beauty in her bower  
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even  
My own desires—what then were you?) if  
sorrow—

Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce  
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth  
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?  
Contempt were all of this!

*Mil.* Do you believe . . .  
Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe  
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er

The past ! We'll love on—you will love me still !

*Mer.* Oh, to love less what one has injured ! Dove,  
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—

Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength ?

Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee ?

Bloom o'er my crest my fight-mark and device !

Mildred, I love you and you love me !

*Mil.* Go !  
Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

*Mer.* This is not our last meeting ?

*Mil.* One night more.

*Mer.* And then—think, then !

*Mil.* Then, no sweet courtship-days, No dawning consciousness of love for us, No strange and palpitating births of sense From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,

Reserves and confidences: morning's over !

*Mer.* How else should love's perfected noontide follow ?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

*Mil.* So may it be ! but—  
You are cautious, love ?  
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls ?

*Mer.* Oh, trust me ! Then our final meeting's fixed ?

To-morrow night ?

*Mil.* Farewell ! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore ?

His foot is on the yew-tree bough—the turf Receives him—now the moonlight as he runs Embraces him—but he must go—is gone—Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my love !

He's gone—Oh, I'll believe him every word !

I was so young—I loved him so—I had

No mother—God forgot me—and I fell.

There may be pardon yet—all's doubt beyond.

Surely the bitterness of death is past !

## ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Library.*

*Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.*

This way—In, Gerard, quick !

[As GERARD enters TRESHAM secures the door.]

Now speak ! or, wait—I'll bid you speak directly. [Seats himself.]

Now repeat Firmly and circumstantially the tale



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**"What book  
Is it I wanted, Thorold?"**



You've just now told me; it eludes me;  
either  
I did not listen, or the half is gone  
Away from me—How long have you lived  
here?  
Here in my house, your father kept our  
woods  
Before you?

*Ger.* —As his father did, my lord.  
I have been eating sixty years, almost,  
Your bread.

*Tresh.* Yes, yes—You ever were of all  
The servants in my father's house, I know,  
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.

*Ger.* I'll speak  
God's truth: night after night . . .

*Tresh.* Since when?  
*Ger.* At least

A month—each midnight has some man  
access  
To Lady Mildred's chamber.

*Tresh.* Tush, "access"—  
No wide words like "access" to me!

*Ger.* He runs  
Along the woodside, crosses to the south,  
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .

*Tresh.* The last great yew-tree?  
*Ger.* You might stand upon  
The main boughs like a platform . . . Then  
he . .

*Tresh.* Quick!

*Ger.* . . . Climbs up, and, where they  
    lessen at the top,  
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,  
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line  
That reaches to the Lady's casement—

*Tresh.* —Which  
He enters not! Gerard—some wretched fool  
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!  
When such are young, it seems a precious  
    thing  
To have approached,—to merely have ap-  
    proached,  
Got sight of, the abode of her they set  
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does not  
    enter?  
Gerard?

*Ger.* There is a lamp that's full in the  
    midst,  
Under a red square in the painted glass  
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

*Tresh.* Leave that name out! Well?  
That lamp?

*Ger.* Is moved at midnight higher up  
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane—he  
    waits  
For that among the boughs; at sight of  
    that,  
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,  
Open the Lady's casement, enter there . . .

*Tresh.* —And stay?

*Ger.* An hour, two hours.

*Tresh.* And this you saw  
Once?—twice?—quick!  
*Ger.* Twenty times.  
*Tresh.* And what brings you  
Under the yew-trees?  
*Ger.* The first night I left  
My range so far, to track the stranger  
stag  
That broke the pale, I saw the man.  
*Tresh.* Yet sent  
No cross-bow shaft thro' the marauder?  
*Ger.* But  
He came, my lord, the first time he was  
seen,  
In a great moonlight, light as any day,  
*From* Lady Mildred's chamber.  
*Tresh.* [After a pause.] You have no  
cause—  
—Who could have cause to do my sister  
wrong?  
*Ger.* Oh, my lord, only once—let me this  
once  
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I  
noted  
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net  
Plucked me this way and that—fire, if I  
turned  
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,  
If down I flung myself and strove to die.  
The lady could not have been seven years old  
When I was trusted to conduct her safe

Thro' the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white  
fawn

I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand  
Within a month. She ever had a smile  
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo  
What's done to lop each limb from off this  
trunk . . .

All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—  
I mean, I could not speak and bring her  
hurt

For Heaven's compelling : but when I was  
fixed

To hold my peace, each morsel of your food  
Eaten beneath your roof, my birthplace too,  
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in  
doubts

What it behoved me do. This morn it  
seemed

Either I must confess to you, or die :  
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm  
That crawls, to have betrayed my Lady !

*Tresh.*                                   No—

No—Gerard !

*Ger.*                                   Let me go !

*Tresh.*                                   A man, you say—  
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind?  
What dress?

*Ger.* A slouched hat and a large dark  
foreign cloak

Wraps his whole form: even his face is  
hid;

But I should judge him young ; no hind, be  
sure !

*Tresh.* Why ?

*Ger.* He is ever armed : his sword  
projects

Beneath the cloak.

*Tresh.* Gerard,—I will not say  
No word, no breath of this !

*Ger.* Thanks, thanks, my lord !  
[Goes.

[TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,  
Oh, thought's absurd !—as with some  
monstrous fact

That, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to  
give

Merciful God that made the sun and stars,  
The waters and the green delights of earth,  
The lie ! I apprehend the monstrous fact—  
Yet know the Maker of all worlds is good,  
And yield my reason up, inadequate  
To reconcile what yet I do behold—  
Blasting my sense ! There's cheerful day  
outside—

This is my library—and this the chair  
My father used to sit in carelessly,  
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood  
Between his knees to question him—and  
here,

Gerard, our gray retainer,—as he says,  
Fed with our food from sire to son an  
age,—

Has told a story—I am to believe !  
 That Mildred . . . oh, no, no ! both tales  
     are true,  
 Her pure cheek's story and the forester's !  
 Would she, or could she, err—much less,  
     confound  
 All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .  
     Heaven

Keep me within its hand !—I will sit here  
 Until thought settles and I see my course.  
 Avert, oh God, only this woe from me !

*[As he sinks his head between his arms on  
 the table, GUENDOLEN's voice is heard at  
 the door.]*

Lord Tresham ! [She knocks.] Is Lord  
 Tresham there ?

*[TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls down the  
 first book above him and opens it.]*

Tresh. Come in ! [She enters.]

Ah, Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more ?

Tresh. What should I say more ?

Guen. Pleasant question ! more ?

This more ! Did I besiege poor Mildred's  
 brain

Last night till close on morning with "the  
 Earl"—

"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate  
 Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,  
 What is all this ? You are not well !

Tresh. Who, I ?

You laugh at me.

*Guen.* Has what I'm fain to hope  
Arrived, then? Does that huge tome show  
some blot  
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back  
Than Arthur's time?

*Tresh.* When left you Mildred's  
chamber?

*Guen.* Oh late enough, I told you! The  
main thing  
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,  
Content yourself, she'll grant this paragon  
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

*Tresh.* Send her here!

*Guen.* Thorold?

*Tresh.* I mean—acquaint her, Guen-  
dolen—

—But mildly!

*Guen.* Mildly?

*Tresh.* Ah, you guess'd aright!  
I am not well—there is no hiding it.  
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—  
That is, at once! here in the Library!  
The passage in that old Italian book  
We hunted for so long is found, say,—  
found—

And if I let it slip again . . . you see,  
That she must come—and instantly!

*Guen.* I'll die  
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not  
gloomed

Some blot i' the 'scutcheon !

*Tresh.* Go ! or, Guendolen,  
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—  
In the adjoining gallery—There, go !

[GUENDOLEN goes.]

Another lesson to me ! you might bid  
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct  
Some sly investigation point by point  
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me  
catch

The inquisitorial cleverness some praise !  
If you had told me yesterday, ‘‘ There's one  
“ You needs must circumvent and practise  
with,  
“ Entrap by policies, if you would worm  
“ The truth out—and that one is—Mildred ! ”

There—  
There—reasoning is thrown away on it !  
Prove she's unchaste . . . why you may  
after prove  
That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you  
will !  
Where I can comprehend nought, nought's  
to say,  
Or do, or think ! Force on me but the first  
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,  
And I shall ne'er make count of them !

*Enter MILDRED.*

*Mil.* What book  
Is it I wanted, Thorold ? Guendolen

Thought you were pale—you are not pale !  
That book ?

That's Latin surely !

*Tresh.* Mildred—here's a line—  
(Don't lean on me—I'll English it for you)  
"Love conquers all things." What love  
conquers them ?

What love should you esteem—best love ?

*Mil.* True love.

*Tresh.* I mean, and should have said,  
whose love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love ?

*Mil.* The list's so long—there's father's,  
mother's, husband's . . .

*Tresh.* Mildred, I do believe a brother's  
love

For a sole sister must exceed them all !

For see now, only see ! there's no alloy  
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold  
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim ;  
You never gave her life—not even aught  
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,  
Enriched her—so your love can claim no  
right

O'er hers save pure love's claim—that's what  
I call

Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope  
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,  
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods,  
Or played together in the meadow hay.

Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your  
worth

Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,  
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed  
esteem,

—Much head these make against the new-  
comer !

The startling apparition—the strange youth—  
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or,  
say,

Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all  
change

This Ovid ever sang about !) your soul  
. . . *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul !

With her

'Twas winter yesterday ; now, all is warmth,  
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's  
voice,

"Arise and come away !" Come whither ?  
—far

Enough from the esteem, respect, and all  
The brother's somewhat insignificant  
Array of rights ! all which he knows before—  
Has calculated on so long ago !

I think such love, (apart from yours and  
mine,)

Contented with its little term of life,  
Intending to retire betimes, aware  
How soon the background must be place  
for it,

I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds  
All the world's loves in its unworldliness.

*Mil.* What is this for ?

*Tresh.*                    This, Mildred, is it for !  
Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon !  
That's one of many points my haste left out—  
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-  
    slight film  
Between the being tied to you by birth,  
And you, until those slender threads compose  
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes  
And fears and fancies, all her life, from  
    yours—  
So close you live and yet so far apart !  
And must I rend this web, tear up, break  
    down  
The sweet and palpitating mystery  
That makes her sacred ? You—for you I  
    mean,  
Shall I speak—Shall I not speak ?

*Mil.*                      Speak !  
*Tresh.*                      I will.

Is there a story men could—any man  
Could tell of you, you would conceal from me ?  
I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip !  
Say, "There is no such story men could  
    tell,"  
And I'll believe you, tho' I disbelieve  
The world . . . the world of better men  
    than I,  
And women such as I suppose you—Speak !  
[After a pause.] Not speak ? Explain then !  
    clear it up, then ! Move  
Some of the miserable weight away

That presses lower than the grave ! Not  
speak ?

Some of the dead weight, Mildred ! Ah, if I  
Could bring myself to plainly make their  
charge

Against you ! Must I, Mildred ? Silent  
still ?

[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has  
night by night

Admittance to your chamber ?

[*After a pause.*] Then, his name !  
Till now, I only had a thought for you—  
But now,—his name !

*Mil.* Thorold, do you devise  
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit  
There be ! 'tis nought to say that I'll endure  
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to  
purge

Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire—  
But do not plunge me into other guilt !  
Oh, guilt enough ! I cannot tell his name.

*Tresh.* Then judge yourself ! How should  
I act ? Pronounce !

*Mil.* Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt  
me thus !

To die here in this chamber by that sword  
Would seem like punishment—so should I  
glide

Like an arch-cheat, into extredest bliss !  
'Twere easily arranged for me ! but you—  
What would become of you ?

*Tresh.* And what will now  
 Become of me? I'll hide your shame and  
     mine  
 From every eye ; the dead must heave their  
     hearts  
 Under the marble of our chapel-floor ;  
 They cannot rise and blast you ! You may  
     wed  
 Your paramour above our mother's tomb ;  
 Our mother cannot move from 'neath your  
     foot.  
 We two will somehow wear this one day  
     out :  
 But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl !  
 The youth without suspicion that faces come  
 From Heaven, and hearts from . . . whence  
     proceed such hearts ?  
 I have despatched last night at your com-  
     mand  
 A missive bidding him present himself  
 To-morrow here—thus much is said—the  
     rest  
 Is understood as if 'twere written down—  
 “ His suit finds favour in your eyes,”—now  
     dictate  
 This morning's letter that shall countermand  
 Last night's—do dictate that !

*Mil.* But, Thorold—if  
 I will receive him as I said ?  
*Tresh.* *The Earl?*  
*Mil.* I will receive him !

· *Tresh.* [Starting up.] Ho there ! Guendolen !

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome too ! Look there !

The woman there !

*Aus. and Guen.* How ? Mildred ?

*Tresh.* Mildred once !

Now the receiver night by night, when sleep  
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,  
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives  
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which  
holds

You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held  
A thousand Treshams—never one like her !  
No lighter of the signal lamp her quick  
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness  
To mix with breath as foul ! no loosener  
Of the lattice, practised in the stealthy  
tread,

The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go !

Not one composer of the Bacchant's mien  
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a  
word !

Know her !

*Guen.* Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least !  
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she  
stands

Rigid as stone and whiter !

*Tresh.*                    You have heard . . .

*Guen.* Too much ! you must proceed on  
further !

*Mil.*                    Yes—

Proceed—All's truth ! Go from me !

*Tresh.*                    All is truth,  
She tells you ! Well, you know, or ought  
to know,  
All this I would forgive in her. I'd con  
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take  
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,  
I'd bind myself before them to exact  
The prescribed vengeance—and one word  
of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory  
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride  
Above all prides, my all in all so long,  
Had scattered every trace of my resolve !  
What were it silently to waste away  
And see her waste away from this day forth,  
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,  
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die,  
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten ?  
It were not so impossible to bear !

But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge  
renewed

Of love with the successful gallant there,  
She'll calmly bid me help her to entice,  
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth  
Who thinks her all that's chaste, and good,  
and pure,

—Invite me to betray him . . . who so fit  
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed ?  
—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her  
own phrase)—  
This, who could bear ? Why, you have  
heard of thieves,  
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace—who yet have  
laughed,  
“Talk not of tortures to me—I'll betray  
“No comrade I've pledged faith to !”—you  
have heard  
“Of wretched women—all but, Mildreds—  
tied  
By wild illicit ties to losels vile  
You'd tempt them to forsake ; and they'll  
reply  
“Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I  
have  
“In him, why should I leave him then for  
gold,  
“Repute, or friends ?”—and you have felt  
your heart  
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world  
As to so many friends ; bad as you please,  
You've felt they were God's men and women  
still,  
So not to be disowned by you ! but she,  
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up  
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide  
Their intercourse the surer ! and, for this,  
I curse her to her face before you all !

Shame hunt her from the earth ! Then  
 Heaven do right  
 To both ! It hears me now—shall judge  
 her then !

[*As MILDRED faints and falls, TRESHAM rushes out.*

*Aus.* Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany  
 you !

*Guen.* We ?

What, and leave Mildred ? We ? why,  
 where's my place

But by her side, and where's yours but by  
 mine ?

Mildred—one word—only look at me, then !

*Aus.* No, Guendolen ! I echo Thorold's  
 voice !

She is unworthy to behold . . .

*Guen.* Us two ?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I  
 Approved your speech—if you (to put the  
 thing

At lowest) you, the soldier, bound to make  
 The King's cause yours, and fight for it,  
 and throw

Regard to others of its right or wrong,  
 —If with a death-white woman you can help,  
 Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,  
 You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend  
 This morning, playfellow but yesterday,  
 Who've said, or thought at least a thousand  
 times,

“I’d serve you if I could,” should now face  
round  
And say, “Ah, that’s to only signify  
“I’d serve you while you’re fit to serve  
yourself—  
“So long as fifty eyes await the turn  
“Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed  
wish,  
“I’ll proffer my assistance you’ll not need—  
“When every tongue is praising you, I’ll join  
“The praisers’ chorus—when you’re hemmed  
about  
“With lives between you and’ detraction—  
lives  
“To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,  
“Rough hand should violate the sacred ring  
“Their worship throws about you,—then  
indeed,  
“Who’ll stand up for you stout as I?”  
If so  
We said and so we did,—not Mildred there  
Would be unworthy to behold us both,  
But we should be unworthy, both of us,  
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,  
Which, if that sword were broken in your  
face  
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your  
breast,  
And you cast out with hootings and contempt,  
—Would push his way thro’ all the hooters,  
gain

Your side, go off with you and all your  
shame

To the next ditch you chose to die in !  
Austin,

Do you love me ? Here's Austin, Mildred,  
—here's

Your brother says he does not believe half—  
No, nor half that—of all he heard ! He says,  
Look up and take his hand !

*Aus.* Look up and take  
My hand, dear Mildred !

*Mil.* I—I was so young !  
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had  
No mother—God forgot me—so I fell !

*Guen.* Mildred !

*Mil.* Require no further ! Did I  
dream

That I could palliate what is done ? All's  
true.

Now, punish me ! A woman takes my hand !  
Let go my hand ! You do not know, I see—  
I thought that Thorold told you.

*Guen.* What is this ?  
Where start you to ?

*Mil.* Oh Austin, loosen me !  
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were  
worse,

In their surprise, than Thorold's ! Oh, unless  
You stay to execute his sentence, loose  
My hand ! Has Thorold gone, and are you  
here ?

*Guen.* Here, Mildred, we two friends  
of yours will wait  
Your bidding ; be you silent, sleep or muse !  
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,  
How can we do it if we are not by ?  
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will !  
One spirit to command, and one to love  
And to believe in it and do its best,  
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world  
Has been won many a time, its length and  
breadth,  
By just such a beginning !

*Mil.* I believe  
If once I threw my arms about your neck  
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I  
Should weep again !

*Guen.* Let go her hand now, Austin.  
Wait for me.—Pace the gallery and think  
On the world's seemings and realities  
Until I call you. [AUSTIN goes.]

*Mil.* No—I cannot weep !  
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—  
no tears !

O Guendolen, I love you !

*Guen.* Yes : and "love"  
Is a short word that says so very much !  
It says that you confide in me.

*Mil.* Confide !  
*Guen.* Your lover's name, then ! I've so  
much to learn,  
Ere I can work in your behalf !

- Mil.* My friend,  
You know I cannot tell his name.
- Guen.* At least  
He *is* your lover? and you love him too?
- Mil.* Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am  
fallen  
So low!
- Guen.* You love him still, then?
- Mil.* My sole prop  
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,  
Each night ere I lie down, “I was so  
young—  
“I had no mother—and I loved him so!”  
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare  
Trust Him my soul in sleep.
- Guen.* How could you let us  
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?
- Mil.* There is a cloud around me.
- Guen.* But you said  
You would receive his suit in spite of this?
- Mil.* I say there is a cloud . . .
- Guen.* No cloud to me!  
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!
- Mil.* What maddest fancy . . .
- Guen.* [Calling aloud.] Austin!  
(Spare your pains—  
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—
- Mil.* By all you love, sweet Guendolen,  
forbear!
- Have I confided in you . . .
- Guen.* Just for this!

Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!  
 But I *did* guess it—that is, I divined—  
 Felt by an instinct how it was—why else  
 Should I pronounce you free from all that  
 heap

Of sins which had been irredeemable?  
 I felt they were not yours—what other way  
 Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly  
 mine!

*Mil.* If you would see me die before his  
 face . . .

*Guen.* I'd hold my peace! And if the  
 Earl returns  
 To-night?

*Mil.* Ah, Heaven, he's lost!

*Guen.* I thought so! Austin!

*Enter* AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

*Aus.* Thorold's gone,  
 I know not how, across the meadowland.  
 I watched him till I lost him in the skirts  
 Of the beech-wood.

*Guen.* Gone? All thwarts us!

*Mil.* Thorold too?

*Guen.* I have thought. First lead this  
 Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side: and then we'll seek  
 Your brother; and I'll tell you, by the way,  
 The greatest comfort in the world. You said  
 There was a clew to all. Remember, sweet,  
 He said there was a clew! I hold it. Come!

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED'S window. A light seen through a central red pane*

*Enter TRESHAM through the trees.*

Again here ! But I cannot lose myself.  
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed  
glades  
And dells and bosky paths which used to  
lead  
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering  
My boy's adventurous step ; and now they  
tend  
Hither or soon or late ; the blackest shade  
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees  
ope wide,  
And the dim turret I have fled from fronts  
Again my step ; the very river put  
Its arm about me and conducted me  
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun  
Their will no longer—do your will with me !  
Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering  
scheme  
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,  
Were nothing : all men hope, and see their  
hopes

Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew :  
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours  
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,  
Were just as though I hoped that from  
these old

Confederates against the sovereign day,  
Children of older and yet older sires  
(Whose living coral berries dropped, as now  
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,  
On many a beauty's wimple) would proceed  
No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its  
root,

Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.  
Why came I here? What must I do?—  
[A bell strikes.]—A bell?

Midnight! and 'tis at midnight . . . Ah, I  
catch  
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your  
meaning now  
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will  
serve!

[He retires behind one of the trees. After a  
pause, enter MERTOUN cloaked as before.

Mer. Not time! Beat out thy last  
voluptuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought  
the clock

In the chapel struck as I was pushing thro'  
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise  
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!  
So much the more delicious task to see

Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by  
thorn,

All traces of the rough forbidden path  
My rash love lured her to ! Each day  
must see

Some fear of hers effaced, some hope  
renewed !

Then there will be surprises, unforeseen  
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past !

[*The light is placed above in the purple  
pane.*]

And see, my signal rises ! Mildred's star !  
I never saw it lovelier than now  
It rises for the last time ! If it sets,  
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn !

[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of  
the avenue, TRESHAM arrests his arm.*]

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp ! Here's  
gold.

'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck  
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub  
beneath

The casement there ! Take this, and hold  
your peace.

*Tresh.* Into the moonlight yonder, come  
with me !

—Out of the shadow !

*Mer.* I am armed, fool !

*Tresh.* Yes,

Or no ?—You'll come into the light, or no ?  
My hand is on your throat—refuse !—

*Mer.* That voice !  
Where have I heard . . . no—that was  
mild and slow.

I'll come with you ! [They advance.]

*Tresh.* You're armed—that's well.  
Your name—who are you ?

*Mer.* (Tresham !—she is lost !)

*Tresh.* Oh, silent ? Do you know, you  
bear yourself

Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had  
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look  
When they're detected, still your kind has  
looked !

The bravo holds an assured countenance,  
The thief is voluble and plausible,  
But silently the slave of lust has crouched  
When I have fancied it before a man !

Your name ?

*Mer.* I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,  
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—  
That he for his own sake forbear to ask  
My name ! As Heaven's above, his future  
weal

Or woe depends upon my silence ! Vain !  
I read your white inexorable face !  
Know me, Lord Tresham ! [He throws off  
his disguises.]

*Tresh.* Mertoun !

[After a pause.] Draw now !

*Mer.* Hear me

But speak first !

*Tresh.* Not one least word on your life !

Be sure that I will strangle in your throat  
The least word that informs me how you live

And yet seem what you seem ! No doubt  
'twas you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin !

We should join hands in frantic sympathy  
If you once taught me the unteachable,  
Explained how you can live so, and so lie !  
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,  
The old belief—a life like yours is still  
Impossible ! Now draw !

*Mer.* Not for my sake,  
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,  
And most, for her sake !

*Tresh.* Ha, ha, what should I  
Know of your ways ? A miscreant like  
yourself,  
How must one rouse his ire ?—A blow ?—  
that's pride  
No doubt, to him ! one spurns him, does  
one not ?  
Or sets the foot upon his mouth—or spits  
Into his face ! Come—which, or all of  
these ?

*Mer.* 'Twixt him, and me, and Mildred,  
Heaven be judge !  
Can I avoid this ? Have your will, my Lord !

[*He draws, and, after a few passes, falls.*

*Tresh.* You are not hurt?

*Mer.* You'll hear me now!

*Tresh.* But rise!

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, say I not "you'll  
hear me now!"

And what procures a man the right to speak  
In his defence before his fellow-man,  
But—I suppose—the thought that presently  
He may have leave to speak before his God  
His whole defence?

*Tresh.* Not hurt? It cannot be!  
You made no effort to resist me. Where  
Did my sword reach you? Why not have  
returned

My thrusts? Hurt where?

*Mer.* My lord—

*Tresh.* How young he is!

*Mer.* Lord Tresham, I am very young,  
and yet

I have entangled other lives with mine.  
Do let me speak—and do believe my speech,  
That when I die before you presently,—

*Tresh.* Can you stay here till I return  
with help?

*Mer.* Oh, stay by me! When I was  
less than boy

I did you grievous wrong, and knew it  
not—

Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,  
I could not find what seemed a better way

To right you than I took : my life—you feel  
 How less than nothing had been giving you  
 The life you've taken? But I thought my  
 way

The better—only for your sake and hers.  
 And as you have decided otherwise,  
 Would I had an infinity of lives  
 To offer you! — now say—instruct me —  
 think!

Can you from out the minutes I have left  
 Eke out my reparation ? Oh—think—think !  
 For I must wring a partial—dare I say,  
 Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

*Tresh.* I do  
 Forgive you.

*Mer.* Wait and ponder that great  
 word !  
 Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope  
 To speak to you of—Mildred !

*Tresh.* Mertoun,—haste  
 And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you  
 Should tell me for a novelty you're young—  
 Thoughtless—unable to recall the past !  
 Be but your pardon ample as my own !

*Mer.* Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke  
 and a drop  
 Of blood or two, should bring all this about !  
 Why, 'twas my very fear of you—my love  
 Of you—(what passion's like a boy's for one  
 Like you?)—that ruined me ! I dreamed of  
 you—

You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,  
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned  
To knit myself to you—but I was young,  
And your surpassing reputation kept me  
So far aloof—oh, wherefore all that love?  
With less of love, my glorious yesterday  
Of praise and gentle words and kindest  
looks,

Had taken place perchance six months ago!  
Even now—how happy we had been! And  
yet

I know the thought of this escaped you,  
Tresham!

Let me look up into your face—I feel  
'Tis changed above me—yet my eyes are  
glazed.

Where? where?

*[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye  
catches the lamp.]*

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?  
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life  
That's bleeding fast away!—I'll live—must  
live,

There! if you'll only turn me I shall live  
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but  
heard!

Had you but heard! What right have you  
to set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,  
And then say, as we perish, "Had I  
thought,

"All had gone otherwise." We've sinned  
and die:  
Never you sin, Lord Tresham!—for you'll  
die,  
And God will judge you.

*Tresh.* Yes, be satisfied—  
That process is begun.

*Mer.* And she sits there  
Waiting for me. Now, say you this to her—  
You—not another—say, I saw him die  
As he breathed this—"I love her"—(you  
don't know  
What those three small words mean) say,  
loving her  
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death  
With memories . . . I speak to her—not  
you,  
Who had no pity—will have no remorse,  
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with  
me,  
Dear Mildred!—'tis so easy—and you'll 'scape  
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,  
Wth rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds  
Done to you—heartless men to have my  
heart,  
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the  
worm,  
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—Oh God!—  
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear  
The felon stripe by stripe? Die, Mildred!  
*Leave*

Their honourable world to them—for God  
We're good enough, tho' the world casts us  
out !

[*A whistle is heard.*

*Tresh.* Ho, Gerard !

*Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN,  
with lights.*

No one speak ! you see what's done !  
I cannot bear another voice !

*Mer.* There's light—  
Light all about me and I move to it.  
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not  
Just promise to deliver words of mine  
To Mildred ?

*Tresh.* I will bear those words to her.

*Mer.* Now ?

*Tresh.* Now ! Lift you the body, Gerard,  
and leave me

The head.

[*As they have half raised MERTOUN, he turns suddenly.*

*Mer.* I knew they turned me—turn me  
not from her !

There ! stay you ! there ! [*Dies.*

*Guen.* [After a pause.] Austin, remain you  
here

With Thorold until Gerard comes with help—  
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go  
To Mildred.

*Tresh.* Guendolen, I hear each word

You utter—did you hear him bid me give  
 His message? Did you hear my promise? I,  
 And only I, see Mildred!

*Guen.* She will die.

*Tresh.* Oh no, she will not die! I dare  
 not hope

She'll die. What ground have you to think  
 she'll die?

Why, Austin's with you!

*Aus.* Had we but arrived  
 Before you fought!

*Tresh.* There was no fight at all!  
 He let me slaughter him—the boy!—I'll  
 trust

The body there to you and Gerard—thus!  
 Now bear him on before me.

*Aus.* Whither bear him?

*Tresh.* Oh, to my chamber. When we  
 meet there next,  
 We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*  
*Will she die, Guendolen?*

*Guen.* Where are you taking me?

*Tresh.* He fell just here!  
 Now answer me. Shall you in your whole  
 life

—You who have nought to do with  
 Mertoun's fate,

Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,  
 Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?  
 When you and Austin wander arm in arm

Thro' our ancestral grounds, will not a shade

Be ever on the meadow and the waste—

Another kind of shade than when the night  
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers  
up !

But will you ever so forget his breast

As willingly to cross this bloody turf

Under the black yew avenue ? That's well !

You turn your head ! and *I* then ?—

*Guen.*   What is done  
Is done ! My care is for the living.

Thorold,

Bear up against this burthen—more remains  
To set the neck to !

*Tresh.*   Dear and ancient trees  
My fathers planted, and I loved so well !  
What have I done that, like some fabled  
crime

Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus  
Her miserable dance amidst you all ?

Oh, never more for me shall winds intone  
With all your tops a vast antiphony,  
Demanding and responding in God's praise !  
Hers ye are now — not mine !   Farewell  
—Farewell !

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S *Chamber.* MILDRED  
*alone.*

He comes not ! I have heard of those who  
seemed  
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought  
Sorrow might slay them when she listed—  
yet  
Did they so gather up their diffused strength  
At her first menace, but they bade her strike,  
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to  
scorn.  
Oh, 'tis not so with me ! the first woe fell,  
And the rest fall upon it, not on me :  
Else should I bear that Henry comes not ?—  
fails  
Just this first night out of so many nights ?  
Loving is done with ! Were he sitting  
now,  
As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd  
love  
No more—contrive no thousand happy ways  
To hide love from the loveless, any more !  
I think I might have urged some little point  
In my defence, to Thorold ; he was breath-  
less  
For the least hint of a defence ; but no !  
The first shame over, all that would might  
fall.  
No Henry ! Yet I merely sit and think

The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have  
crept  
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost  
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon  
Such woe ! I crouch away from it ! 'Tis she,  
Mildred, will break her heart, not I ! The  
world  
Forsakes me—only Henry's left me—left ?  
When I have lost him, for he does not  
come,  
And I sit stupidly. . . . Oh Heaven,  
break up  
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,  
By any means or any messenger !

*Tresh.* [Without.]                           Mildred !  
*Mil.* Come in ! Heaven hears me !  
[*TRESHAM enters.*]                           You ? alone ?  
Oh, no more cursing !  
*Tresh.*   Mildred, I must sit.  
There—you sit !  
*Mil.* Say it, Thorold—do not look  
The curse—deliver all you come to say !  
What must become of me ? Oh speak that  
thought  
Which makes your brow and cheek so pale !  
*Tresh.* My thought ?  
*Mil.* All of it !  
*Tresh.* How we waded—years ago—  
After those water-lilies, till the splash,  
I know not how, surprised us ; and you  
dared

Neither advance nor turn back, so we stood  
 Laughing and crying until Gerard came—  
 Once safe upon the turf, the loudest, too,  
 For once more reaching the relinquished  
 prize !

How idle thoughts are—some men's—dying  
 men's !

Mildred,—

*Mil.* You call me kindlier by my name  
 Than even yesterday—what is in that ?

*Tresh.* It weighs so much upon my mind  
 that I

This morning took an office not my own !  
 I might . . . of course, I must be glad or  
     grieved,  
 Content or not, at every little thing  
 That touches you—I may with a wrung  
     heart

Even reprove you, Mildred ; I did more—  
 Will you forgive me ?

*Mil.* Thorold? do you mock? . . .  
 Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that  
     word !

*Tresh.* Forgive me, Mildred!—are you  
     silent, sweet?

*Mil.* [Starting up.] Why does not Henry  
     Mertoun come to-night?

Are you, too, silent?

[Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing  
     to his scabbard, which is empty.

Ah, this speaks for you !

You've murdered Henry Mertoun ! now  
proceed !

What is it I must pardon ? This and all ?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be !

*Tresh.* He bade me tell you. . . .

*Mil.* What I do forbid

Your utterance of ! so much that you may  
tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . .  
but, no !

You'll tell me that he loved me, never more  
Than bleeding out his life there—must I say  
“Indeed” to that ? Enough ! I pardon you !

*Tresh.* You cannot, Mildred ! for the harsh  
words, yes :

Of this last deed Another's Judge—whose  
doom

I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

*Mil.* Oh true ! there's nought for me to  
pardon ! True !

You loosed my soul of all its cares at once—  
Death makes me sure of him for ever ! *You*  
Tell me his last words ? *He* shall tell me  
them,

And take my answer—not in words, but  
reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late,  
Which death . . .

*Tresh.* Death ? you are dying too ?

Well said

Of Guendolen ! I dared not hope you'd  
die—

But she was sure of it.

*Mil.* Tell Guendolen I loved  
her, and tell Austin . . .

*Tresh.* . . . Him you loved—  
And me ?

*Mil.* Ah, Thorold ! was't not rashly  
done  
To quench that blood, on fire with youth  
and hope

And love of me, whom you loved too, and  
yet

Suffered to sit here waiting his approach  
While you were slaying him ? Oh, doubt-  
lessly

You let him speak his poor confused boy's-  
speech

—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath  
And respite me !—you let him try to give  
The story of our loves, and ignorance,  
And the brief madness, and the long despair—  
You let him plead all this, because your code  
Of honour bids you hear before you strike :  
But at the end, as he looked up for life  
Into your eyes—you struck him down !

*Tresh.* No ! no !  
Had I but heard him—had I let him speak  
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on  
him,

I had desisted ! Why, as he lay there,

The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all  
 The story ere he told it ! I saw thro'  
 The troubled surface of his crime and yours  
 A depth of purity immovable !  
 Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest,  
 Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath !  
 I would not glance—my punishment's at hand.  
 There, Mildred, is the truth ! and you—  
 say on—

You curse me ?

*Mil.* As I dare approach that Heaven  
 Which has not bade a living thing despair,  
 Which needs no code to keep its grace from  
 stain,  
 But bids the vilest worm that turns on it  
 Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,  
 But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of  
 souls ! [Falls on his neck.]  
 There ! do not think too much upon the past !  
 The cloud that's broke was all the same a  
 cloud

While it stood up between my friend and  
 you !

You hurt him 'neath its shadow—but is that  
 So past retrieve ? I have his heart, you  
 know—

I may dispose of it—I give it you !  
 It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm me,  
 Henry ! [Dies.]

*Tresh.* I wish thee joy, beloved ! I am glad  
 In thy full gladness !

*Guen.* [Without.] Mildred ! Tresham !  
[Entering with AUSTIN.] Thorold, I could  
desist no longer. Ah, she swoons !

That's well—

*Tresh.* Oh ! better far than that !

*Guen.* She's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !

*Tresh.* She threw them thus  
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died.  
—You'll let them stay now, Guendolen !

*Aus.* Leave her  
And look to him ! What ails you, Thorold ?

*Guen.* White  
As she—and whiter ! Austin—quick—this  
side !

*Aus.* A froth is oozing thro' his clenched  
teeth—

Both lips, where they're not bitten thro',  
are black !

Speak, dearest Thorold !

*Tresh.* Something does weigh down  
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should  
fall  
But for you, Austin, I believe !—there, there—  
'Twill pass away soon !—ah,—I had for-  
gotten—

I am dying.

*Guen.* Thorold—Thorold—why was this ?

*Tresh.* I said, just as I drank the poison  
off,

The earth would be no longer earth to me,

The life out of all life was gone from me!  
There are blind ways provided, the foredone  
Heart-weary player in this pageant-world  
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile  
By the conspicuous portal :—I am through—  
Just through :—

*Guen.* Don't leave him, Austin ! death  
is close.

*Tresh.* Already Mildred's face is peaceful!

I see you, Austin—feel you—here's my hand,  
Put yours in it—You, Guendolen, yours too !  
You're Lord and Lady now — You're  
Treshams—Name

And fame are yours — You hold our  
'Scutcheon up.

Austin, no Blot on it! You see how blood  
Must wash one blot away: the first blot  
came

And the first blood came. To the vain  
world's eye

All's gules again—no care to the vain world,  
From whence the red was drawn !

*Aus.* No blot shall come !

*Tresh.* I said that—yet it did come.  
Should it come,

Vengeance is God's not man's. Remember me! [Dies.]

Guen. [Letting fall the pulseless arm.]  
Ah, Thorold, we can but—remember  
you!

## IN A GONDOLA.

*He sings.*

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart  
 In this my singing !  
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears  
 part ;  
 The very night is clinging  
 Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space  
 Above me, whence thy face  
 May light my joyous heart to thee its  
 dwelling-place.

*She speaks.*

Say after me, and try to say  
 My very words, as if each word  
 Came from you of your own accord,  
 In your own voice, in your own way :  
 "This woman's heart, and soul, and brain  
 "Are mine as much as this gold chain  
 "She bids me wear ; which" (say again)  
 "I choose to make by cherishing  
 "A precious thing, or choose to fling  
 "Over the boat-side, ring by ring."  
 And yet once more say . . . no word more !  
 Since words are only words. Give o'er !  
 Unless you call me, all the same,  
 Familiarly by my pet-name

Which, if the Three should hear you call,  
 And me reply to, would proclaim  
 At once our secret to them all :  
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—  
 Do break down the partition-wall  
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds  
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.  
 What's left but—all of me to take ?  
 I am the Three's ; prevent them, slake  
 Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage  
 In practising with gems can loose  
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce  
 And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,  
 Leave them my ashes when thy use  
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

*He sings.*

I.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 What's that poor Agnese doing  
 Where they make the shutters fast ?  
 Gray Zanobi's just a-wooing  
 To his couch the purchased bride :  
 Past we glide !

II.

Past we glide, and past, and past !  
 Why's the Pucci Palace flaring  
 Like a beacon to the blast ?  
 Guests by hundreds—not one caring

If the dear host's neck were wried :  
Past we glide !

*She sings.*

I.

The Moth's kiss, first !  
Kiss me as if you made believe  
You were not sure, this eve,  
How my face, your flower, had pursed  
Its petals up ; so, here and there  
You brush it, till I grow aware  
Who wants me, and wide open burst.

II.

The Bee's kiss, now !  
Kiss me as if you entered gay  
My heart at some noonday,  
A bud that dares not disallow  
The claim, so all is rendered up,  
And passively its shattered cup  
Over your head to sleep I bow.

*He sings.*

I.

What are we two ?  
I am a Jew,  
And carry thee, farther than friends can  
pursue,

To a feast of our tribe,  
Where they need thee to bribe  
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe  
Thy . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And  
now,  
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

## II.

Say again, what we are ?  
The sprite of a star,  
I lure thee above where the Destinies bar  
My plumes their full play  
Till a ruddier ray  
Than my pale one announce there is wither-  
ing away  
Some . . . Shatter the vision for ever ! And  
now,  
As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

*He muses.*

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?  
The land's lap or the water's breast ?  
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
Or swim in lucid shallows, just  
Eluding water-lily leaves,  
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust  
To lock you, whom release he must ;  
Which life were best on Summer eves ?

*He speaks, musing.*

Lie back ; could thought of mine improve  
you ?

From this shoulder let there spring  
A wing ; from this, another wing ;  
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you !  
Snow-white must they spring, to blend  
With your flesh, but I intend  
They shall deepen to the end,  
Broader, into burning gold,  
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold  
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet  
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet  
As if a million sword-blades hurled  
Defiance from you to the world !  
Rescue me thou, the only real !  
And scare away this mad Ideal  
That came, nor notions to depart !  
Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art !

*Still he muses.*

I.

What if the Three should catch at last  
Thy serenader ? While there's cast  
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast  
Gian pinions me, Himself has past  
His stylet thro' my back ; I reel ;  
And . . . is it Thou I feel ?

## II.

They trail me, these three godless knaves,  
 Past every church that sains and saves,  
 Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves  
 By Lido's wet accursed graves,  
 They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,  
 And . . . on Thy breast I sink !

*She replies, musing.*

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,  
 As I do : thus : were Death so unlike Sleep,  
 Caught this way ? Death's to fear from  
 flame, or steel,  
 Or poison doubtless ; but from water—feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay me ?  
 There !

Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass  
 To plait in where the foolish jewel was,  
 I flung away : since you have praised my  
 hair,  
 'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

*He speaks.*

Row home ? must we row home ? Too surely  
 Know I where its front's demurely  
 Over the Giudecca piled ;  
 Window just with window mating,  
 Door on door exactly waiting,  
 All's the set face of a child :

But behind it, where's a trace  
Of the staidness and reserve,  
And formal lines without a curve,  
In the same child's playing-face?  
No two windows look one way  
O'er the small sea-water thread  
Below them. Ah, the autumn day  
I, passing, saw you overhead!  
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,  
Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you—  
To catch your loory that must needs  
Escape just then, of all times then,  
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,  
And make me happiest of men.  
I scarce could breathe to see you reach  
So far back o'er the balcony  
(To catch him ere he climbed too high  
Above you in the Smyrna peach)  
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,  
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,  
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake  
The Roman girls were wont, of old,  
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake  
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.  
Dear loory, may his beak retain  
Ever its delicate rose stain  
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms  
Had marked their thief to know again!  
Stay longer yet, for others' sake  
Than mine! what should your chamber do?  
—With all its rarities that ache

In silence while day lasts, but wake  
At night-time and their life renew,  
Suspended just to pleasure you  
—That brought against their will together  
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave  
Around them such a magic tether  
That they look dumb : your harp, believe,  
With all the sensitive tight strings  
That dare not speak, now to itself  
Breathes slumbrously as if some elf  
Went in and out the chords, his wings  
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,  
As an angel may, between the maze  
Of midnight palace-pillars, on  
And on, to sow God's plagues have gone  
Through guilty glorious Babylon.  
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph  
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell,  
As the dry limpet for the lymph  
Come with a tune he knows so well.  
And how your statues' hearts must swell !  
And how your pictures must descend  
To see each other, friend with friend !  
Oh, could you take them by surprise,  
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke  
Doing the quaintest courtesies  
To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke :  
And, deeper into her rock den,  
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen  
You'd find retreated from the ken  
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—

As if the Tizian thinks of her,  
And is not, rather, gravely bent  
On seeing for himself what toys  
Are these, his progeny invent,  
What litter now the board employs  
Whereon he signed a document  
That got him murdered ! Each enjoys  
Its night so well, you cannot break  
The sport up, so, indeed must make  
More stay with me, for others' sake

*She speaks.*

I.

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,  
Is used to tie the jasmine back  
That overflows my room with sweets,  
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets  
My Zanze : if the ribbon's black,  
The Three are watching ; keep away.

II.

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath  
A mesh of water-weeds about  
Its prow, as if he unaware  
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair ;  
That I may throw a paper out  
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper ; safe are we !  
Only one minute more to-night with me ?  
Resume your past self of a month ago !  
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be  
The lady with the colder breast than snow :  
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my  
hand

More than I touch yours when I step to land,  
And say, All thanks, Siora !—

Heart to heart,  
And lips to lips ! Yet once more, ere we  
part,  
Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine  
thou art !

*He is surprised, and stabbed.*

It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and best  
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on thy  
breast.

Still kiss me ! Care not for the cowards !  
Care

Only to put aside thy beauteous hair  
My blood will hurt ! The Three, I do not  
scorn

To death, because they never lived : but I  
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more  
kiss)—can die !

## CRISTINA.

## I.

SHE should never have looked at me,  
 If she meant I should not love her !  
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,  
 I suppose . . . she may discover  
 All her soul to, if she pleases,  
 And yet leave much as she found them :  
 But I'm not so, and she knew it  
 When she fixed me, glancing round them.

## II.

What ? To fix me thus meant nothing ?  
 But I can't tell . . . there's my weakness . . .  
 What her look said !—no vile cant, sure,  
 About “need to strew the bleakness  
 “Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,  
 “That the Sea feels”—no “strange  
 yearning  
 “That such souls have, most to lavish  
 “Where there's chance of least returning.”

## III.

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows !  
 But not quite so sunk that moments,  
 Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,  
 When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
 And apprise it if pursuing  
 Or the right way or the wrong way,  
 To its triumph or undoing.

## IV.

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
 There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
 Whereby piled-up honours perish,  
 Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,  
 While just this or that poor impulse,  
 Which for once had play unstifled,  
 Seems the sole work of a life-time  
 That away the rest have trifled.

## V.

Doubt you it, in some such moment,  
 As she fixed me, she felt clearly,  
 Ages past the soul existed,  
 Here an age 'tis resting merely,  
 And hence, fleets again for ages :  
 While the true end, sole and single,  
 It stops here tor is, this love-way,  
 With some other soul to mingle ?

## VI.

Else it loses what it lived for,  
 And eternally must lose it ;  
 Better ends may be in prospect,  
 Deeper blisses, if you choose it,

But this life's end and this love-bliss  
 Have been lost here. Doubt you whether  
 This she felt, as, looking at me,  
 Mine and her souls rushed together ?

## VII.

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,  
 The world's honours, in derision,  
 Trampled out the light for ever :  
 Never fear but there's provision  
 Of the Devil's to quench knowledge  
 Lest we walk the earth in rapture !  
 —Making those who catch God's secret  
 Just so much more prize their capture.

## VIII.

Such am I : the secret's mine now !  
 She has lost me—I have gained her !  
 Her soul's mine : and, thus, grown perfect,  
 I shall pass my life's remainder,  
 Life will just hold out the proving  
 Both our powers, alone and blended—  
 And then, come the next life quickly !  
 This world's use will have been ended.

## PICTOR IGNOTUS.

[FLORENCE, 15—.]

I COULD have painted pictures like that  
youth's  
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up !  
No bar  
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while  
it soothes !—  
Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
To outburst on your night with all my gift  
Of fires from God : nor would my flesh  
have shrunk  
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
And wide to Heaven, or, straight like  
thunder, sunk  
To the centre, of an instant ; or around  
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
The license and the limit, space and bound,  
Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.  
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
Over the canvass could my hand have flung,  
Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
Each passion clear proclaimed without a  
tongue ;  
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,  
A- tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,

Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her  
brood  
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its  
place,  
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle  
braved,—  
O Human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?  
What did ye give me that I have not saved?  
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)  
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,  
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms  
swell,  
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or  
North,  
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,  
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,  
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the  
freight,  
Through old streets named afresh from its  
event,  
Till it reached home, where learned Age  
should greet  
My face, and Youth, the star not yet  
distinct  
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—  
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
With love about, and praise, till life should  
end,  
And then not go to Heaven, but linger  
here,

Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—

The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!

But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such sights

Have scared me, like the revels thro' a door

Of some strange House of Idols at its rites;

This world seemed not the world it was before!

Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped

. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun

To press on me and judge me? Tho' I stooped

Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,  
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!

These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,

Count them for garniture and household stuff,  
And where they live our pictures needs must live,

And see their faces, listen to their prate,

Partakers of their daily pettiness,

Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I hate,

“This likes me more, and this affects me less!”

Wherfore I chose my portion. If at whiles  
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles  
With the same series, Virgin, Babe, and  
Saint,  
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard,  
At least no merchant traffics in my heart ;  
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward  
Vain tongues from where my pictures  
stand apart ;  
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine  
While, blackening in the daily candle-  
smoke,  
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,  
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.  
So die, my pictures ; surely, gently die !  
Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their  
praise its worth ?  
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden  
cry ?  
Tastes sweet the water with such specks  
of earth ?

## THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.

(*In the original*) ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE  
ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER  
GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT  
JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE,  
*Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN  
BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS.  
GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.—R. B.)

## I.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET  
THE Lord, we look to once for all,  
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once :  
He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,  
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.  
See Him no other than as he is ;  
Give both the Infinites their due—  
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,  
As infinite a justice too.  
[Organ : *plagal cadence.*  
As infinite a justice too.]

## II.

## ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,  
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,  
 What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,  
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin—  
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,  
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,  
 And clipt of his wings in Paris square,  
 They bring him now to be burned alive.  
 [And wanteth there grace of lute or  
   clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm  
   him who singeth—  
 We bring John now to be burned alive.

## III.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;  
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;  
 But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,  
 Make a trench all round with the city  
   muck ;  
 Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;  
   Faggots not few, blocks great and small,  
 Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—  
   For they mean he should roast in the sight  
     of all.

## CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight  
     of all.

## IV.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;  
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;  
 Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;  
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white  
     glow :  
 Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,  
     Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,  
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,  
     Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

## CHORUS.

*Laus Deo*—who bids clap-to the torch.

## V.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,  
     Is burning alive in Paris square !  
 How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?  
     Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?  
 Or heave his chest, while a band goes round ?  
     Or threat with his fist, since his arms are  
         spliced ?  
 Or kick with his feet, now his legs are  
         bound ?  
 —Thinks John—I will call upon Jesus  
     Christ.      [*Here one crosseth himself.*

## VI.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,  
 Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.

(*Salva reverentia.*)

Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,  
I have roasted thee Turks, though men  
roast me.

See thy servant, the plight wherein I am !  
Art thou a Saviour ? Save thou me !"

#### CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me !

#### VII.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word ?

—Saith, it no more means what it pro-  
claims,

Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird ?—  
For she too prattles of ugly names.

—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what  
he knows ;

That God is good and the rest is breath ;  
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's rose ?  
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

#### CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith !

#### VIII.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John !

Some, honied of taste like your leman's  
tongue :

Some, bitter—for why? (roast gaily on!)  
 Their tree struck root in devil's dung!  
 When Paul once reasoned of righteousness  
 And of temperance and of judgment to  
 come,  
 Good Felix trembled, he could no less—  
 John, snickering, crook'd his wicked  
 thumb?

## CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked  
 thumb?

## IX.

Ha ha, John plucks now at his rose  
 To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!  
 Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose  
 Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;  
 And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;  
 And a gust of sulphur is all its smell  
 And lo, he is horribly in the toils  
 Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

## CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

## X.

So, as John called now, through the fire  
 amain,  
 On the Name, he had cursed with, all his  
 life—

To the Person, he bought and sold again—  
 For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—  
 Feature by feature It took its place !  
 And his voice like a mad dog's choking  
 bark

At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face—  
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the  
 dark.

## SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark.

## AN EPISTLE.

## CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,  
 The not-incurious in God's handiwork  
 (This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,  
 Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
 To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
 That puff of vapour from His mouth, man's  
 soul)

—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,  
 Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,  
 Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks  
 Befall the flesh through too much stress and  
 strain,

Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip  
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—  
And aptest in contrivance, under God,  
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—  
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home  
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame  
with peace)  
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer  
still,  
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,  
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than  
drugs)  
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho,  
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art  
Shall count a little labour unrepaid ?  
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
On many a flinty furlong of this land.  
Also the country-side is all on fire  
With rumours of a marching hitherward—  
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.  
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted  
ear ;  
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls :  
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.  
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten  
me,  
And once a town declared me for a spy,  
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,  
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence  
A man with plague-sores at the third degree  
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laugh-  
est here !

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,  
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip  
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.  
A viscid choler is observable  
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,  
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure  
Than our school wots of : there's a spider here  
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of  
tombs,  
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back ;  
Take five and drop them . . . but who  
knows his mind,  
The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?  
His service payeth me a sublime . . .  
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.  
Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,  
There set in order my experiences,  
Gather what most deserves and give thee all—  
Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth  
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-  
grained,  
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,  
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease  
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—  
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at  
Zoar—  
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,  
Protesteth his devotion is my price—  
Suppose I write what harms not, though he  
steal ?

I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,  
What set me off a-writing first of all.  
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !  
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else  
The Man had something in the look of him—  
His case has struck me far more than 'tis  
worth.

So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose  
In the great press of novelty at hand  
The care and pains this somehow stole from  
me)

I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,  
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the  
truth ?

The very man is gone from me but now,  
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.  
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

"Tis but a case of mania—subinduced  
By epilepsy, at the turning-point  
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days,  
When by the exhibition of some drug  
Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art  
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to  
know,  
The evil thing out-breaking all at once  
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—

But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide,  
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,  
The first conceit that entered pleased to write

Whatever it was minded on the wall  
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,  
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent

Attaineth to erase the fancy-scrawls  
Which the returned and new-established soul  
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart  
That henceforth she will read or these or none.

And first—the man's own firm conviction rests

That he was dead (in fact they buried him)  
—That he was dead and then restored to life  
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe :  
—'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.

"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.  
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,  
Instead of giving way to time and health,  
Should eat itself into the life of life,  
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!

For see, how he takes up the after-life.  
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,  
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
The body's habit wholly laudable,

As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
As he were made and put aside to shew.  
Think, could we penetrate by any drug  
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
And bring it clear and fair, by three days'  
sleep !

Whence has the man the balm that brightens  
all ?

This grown man eyes the world now like a  
child.

Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,  
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,  
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,  
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the  
case,—

He listened not except I spoke to him,  
But folded his two hands and let them talk,  
Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no  
fool.

And that's a sample how his years must go.  
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,  
Should find a treasure, can he use the same  
With straightened habits and with tastes  
starved small,

And take at once to his impoverished brain  
The sudden element that changes things,  
—That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his  
hand,

And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?  
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—  
Warily parsimonious, when's no need,

Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?  
All prudent counsel as to what befits  
The golden mean, is lost on such an one.  
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.  
So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge,  
say—

Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—  
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,  
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing  
Heaven.

The man is witless of the size, the sum,  
The value in proportion of all things,  
Or whether it be little or be much.

Discourse to him of prodigious armaments  
Assembled to besiege his city now,  
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—  
'Tis one ! Then take it on the other side,  
Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze  
rapt

With stupor at its very littleness—  
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed  
He caught prodigious import, whole results ;  
And so will turn to us the bystanders  
In ever the same stupor (note this point)  
That we too see not with his opened eyes !  
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,  
Preposterously, at cross purposes.  
Should his child sicken unto death,—why,  
look

For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,  
Or pretermission of his daily craft—

While a word, gesture, glance, from that  
same child,

At play or in the school or laid asleep,  
Will start him to an agony of fear,  
Exasperation, just as like ! demand  
The reason why—" 'tis but a word," object—  
" A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord  
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,  
Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being  
young

We both would unadvisedly recite  
Some charm's beginning, from that book of  
his,

Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst  
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.  
Thou and the child have each a veil alike  
Thrown o'er your heads from under which  
ye both

Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a  
match

Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !  
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—  
(It is the life to lead perforcefully)  
Which runs across some vast distracting orb  
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,  
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—  
The spiritual life around the earthly life !  
The law of that is known to him as this—  
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay  
here.

So is the man perplexed with impulses

Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,  
Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong  
across—

And not along—this black thread through  
the blaze—

“It should be” balked by “here it cannot be.”  
And oft the man’s soul springs into his face  
As if he saw again and heard again  
His sage that bade him “Rise” and he did  
rise.

Something—a word, a tick of the blood  
within

Admonishes—then back he sinks at once  
To ashes, that was very fire before,  
In sedulous recurrence to his trade  
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread—  
And studiously the humbler for that pride,  
Professedly the faultier that he knows  
God’s secret, while he holds the thread of life.  
Indeed the especial marking of the man  
Is prone submission to the Heavenly will—  
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.

‘Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last  
For that same death which will restore his  
being

To equilibrium, body loosening soul  
Divorced even now by premature full growth :  
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
So long as God please, and just how God  
please.

He even seeketh not to please God more

(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God  
please.

Hence I perceive not he affects to preach  
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be—  
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do.  
How can he give his neighbour the real  
ground,

His own conviction? ardent as he is—  
Call his great truth a lie, why still the old  
“Be it as God please” reassureth him.  
I probed the sore as thy disciple should—  
“How, beast,” said I, “this stolid carelessness

Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march  
To stamp out like a little spark thy town,  
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?”  
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.  
The man is apathetic, you deduce?

Contrariwise he loves both old and young,  
Able and weak—affects the very brutes  
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—  
As a wise workman recognises tools  
In a master’s workshop, loving what they  
make.

Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:  
Only impatient, let him do his best,  
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—  
An indignation which is promptly curbed.  
As when in certain travels I have feigned  
To be an ignoramus in our art  
According to some preconceived design,

And happed to hear the land's practitioners  
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,  
 Prattle fantastically on disease,  
 Its cause and cure—and I must hold my  
 peace !

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this  
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene  
 Who wrought this cure, enquiring at the  
 source,  
 Conferring with the frankness that befits ?  
 Alas ! it grieveth me, the learned leech  
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,  
 Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,  
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
 And creed prodigious as described to me.  
 His death which happened when the earth-  
 quake fell  
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss  
 To occult learning in our lord the sage  
 That lived there in the pyramid alone)  
 Was wrought by the mad people—that's  
 their wont—  
 On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,  
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—  
 How could he stop the earthquake ? That's  
 their way !  
 The other imputations must be lies :  
 But take one—though I loathe to give it thee,  
 In mere respect to any good man's fame !  
 (And after all our patient Lazarus

Is stark mad—should we count on what he says?

Perhaps not—though in writing to a leech  
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)  
This man so cured regards the curer then,  
As—God forgive me—who but God himself,  
Creator and Sustainer of the world,  
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile !  
—'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,  
Taught, healed the sick, broke<sub>v</sub> bread at his own house,  
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,  
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,  
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,  
In hearing of this very Lazarus  
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?  
Why write of trivial matters, things of price  
Calling at every moment for remark ?  
I noticed on the margin of a pool  
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,  
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem  
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.  
Nor I myself discern in what is writ  
Good cause for the peculiar interest

And awe indeed this man has touched me with.  
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness  
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus—  
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills  
Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there  
came

A moon made like a face with certain spots  
Multiform, manifold, and menacing :  
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met  
In this old sleepy town at unaware,  
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.  
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked  
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,  
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.  
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends  
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine,  
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou  
think ?

So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—  
So, through the thunder comes a human  
voice

Saying, “ O heart I made, a heart beats here !  
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.  
Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of  
mine,  
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
And thou must love me who have died for  
thee ! ”

The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

## RABBI BEN EZRA.

## I.

GROW old along with me !  
 The best is yet to be,  
 The last of life, for which the first was made :  
 Our times are in His hand  
 Who saith “A whole I planned,  
 “Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all  
 nor be afraid !”

## II.

Not that, amassing flowers,  
 Youth sighed “Which rose make ours,  
 “Which lily leave and then as best recall ?”  
 Not that, admiring stars,  
 It yearned “Nor Jove, nor Mars ;  
 “Mine be some figured flame which blends,  
 transcends them all !”

## III.

Not for such hopes and fears  
 Annulling youth’s brief years,  
 Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !  
 Rather I prize the doubt  
 Low kinds exist without,  
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a  
 spark.

## IV.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
Were man but formed to feed  
**On joy, to solely seek and find and feast :**  
Such feasting ended, then  
As sure an end to men ;  
Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the  
maw-crammed beast ?

## V.

Rejoice we are allied  
To That which doth provide  
**And not partake, effect and not receive !**  
A spark disturbs our clod ;  
Nearer we hold of God  
Who gives, than of His tribes that take,  
I must believe.

## VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
**Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but**  
**go !**  
Be our joys three-parts pain !  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;  
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare, never  
grudge the throe !

## VII.

For thence,—a paradox  
 Which comforts while it mocks,—  
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail :  
 What I aspired to be,  
 And was not, comforts me :  
 A brute I might have been, but would not  
 sink i' the scale.

## VIII.

What is he but a brute  
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,  
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want  
 play ?  
 To man, propose this test—  
 Thy body at its best,  
 How far can that project thy soul on its  
 lone way ?

## IX.

Yet gifts should prove their use :  
 I own the Past profuse  
 Of power each side, perfection every turn  
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
 Brain treasured up the whole ;  
 Should not the heart beat once “ How good  
 to live and learn ”?

## X.

Not once beat “ Praise be Thine !  
 “ I see the whole design,

"I, who saw power, see now love perfect  
too :

"Perfect I call Thy plan :

"Thanks that I was a man !

"Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what  
Thou shalt do !"

#### XI.

For pleasant is this flesh ;  
Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for  
rest ;  
Would we some prize might hold  
To match those manifold  
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we  
did best !

#### XII.

Let us not always say  
"Spite of this flesh to-day  
"I strove, made head, gained ground upon  
the whole !"  
As the bird wings and sings,  
Let us cry "All good things  
"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,  
than flesh helps soul !"

#### XIII.

Therefore I summon age  
To grant youth's heritage,

Life's struggle having so far reached its term :

Thence shall I pass, approved  
 A man, for aye removed  
 From the developed brute ; a god though  
 in the germ.

## xiv.

And I shall thereupon  
 Take rest, ere I be gone  
 Once more on my adventure brave and  
 new :

Fearless and unperplexed,  
 When I wage battle next,  
 What weapons to select, what armour to  
 indue.

## xv.

Youth ended, I shall try  
 My gain or loss thereby ;  
 Leave the fire ashes, what survives is  
 gold :

And I shall weigh the same,  
 Give life its praise or blame :  
 Young, all lay in dispute ; I shall know,  
 being old.

## xvi.

For note, when evening shuts,  
 A certain moment cuts  
 The deed off, calls the glory from the gray :

A whisper from the west  
 Shoots—"Add this to the rest,  
 "Take it and try its worth : here dies another  
 day."

## XVII.

So, still within this life,  
 Though lifted o'er its strife,  
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
 "This rage was right i' the main,  
 "That acquiescence vain :  
 "The Future I may face now I have proved  
 the Past."

## XVIII.

For more is not reserved  
 To man, with soul just nerved  
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :  
 Here, work enough to watch  
 The Master work, and catch  
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's  
 true play.

## XIX.

As it was better, youth  
 Should strive, through acts uncouth,  
 Toward making, than repose on aught found  
 made :  
 So, better, age, exempt  
 From strife, should know, than tempt  
 Further. Thou waitedest age : wait death  
 nor be afraid !

## XX.

Enough now, if the Right  
 And Good and Infinite  
 Be named here, as thou callest thy hand  
 thine own,  
 With knowledge absolute,  
 Subject to no dispute  
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee  
 feel alone.

## XXI.

Be there, for once and all,  
 Severed great minds from small,  
 Announced to each his station in the Past !  
 Was I, the world arraigned,  
 Were they, my soul disdained,  
 Right? Let age speak the truth and give  
 us peace at last !

## XXII.

Now, who shall arbitrate ?  
 Ten men love what I hate,  
 Shun what I follow, slight what I receive ;  
 Ten, who in ears and eyes  
 Match me : we all surmise,  
 They this thing, and I that : whom shall my  
 soul believe ?

## XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass  
 Called " work," must sentence pass,

Things done, that took the eye and had the  
price ;

O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand,  
Found straightway to its mind, could value  
in a trice :

## XXIV.

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account ;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled  
the man's amount :

## XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and  
escaped ;  
All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the  
pitcher shaped.

## XXVI.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,  
That metaphor ! and feel  
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our  
clay,—

Thou, to whom fools propound,  
 When the wine makes its round,  
 " Since life fleets, all is change ; the Past  
 gone, seize to-day ! "

## XXVII.

Fool ! All that is, at all,  
 Lasts ever, past recall ;  
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand  
 sure :  
 What entered into thee,  
 That was, is, and shall be :  
 Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter  
 and clay endure.

## XXVIII.

He fixed thee mid this dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldest fain  
 arrest :  
 Machinery just meant  
 To give thy soul its bent,  
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently  
 impressed.

## XXIX.

What though the earlier grooves  
 Which ran the laughing loves  
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?

What though, about thy rim,  
 Skull-things in order grim  
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner  
 stress ?

## xxx.

Look not thou down but up !  
 To uses of a cup,  
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's  
 peal,  
 The new wine's foaming flow,  
 The Master's lips a-glow !  
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st  
 thou with earth's wheel ?

## xxxI.

But I need, now as then.  
 Thee, God, who mouldest men ;  
 And since, not even while the whirl was  
 worst,  
 Did I,—to the wheel of life  
 With shapes and colours rife,  
 Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake  
 Thy thirst :

## xxxII.

So, take and use Thy work :  
 Amend what flaws may lurk,  
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past  
 the aim !

My times be in Thy hand !  
Perfect the cup as planned !  
Let age approve of youth, and death complete  
the same !

# LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening  
smiles Miles and miles  
On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
Half-asleep  
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or  
stop As they crop—

II.

Was the site once of a city great and gay,  
(So they say)  
Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding  
far  
Peace or war.

III.

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,  
As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
 From the hills  
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run  
 Into one)

## IV.

Where the domed and daring palace shot  
 its spires  
 Up like fires  
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
 Bounding all,  
 Made of marble, men might march on nor  
 be prest,  
 Twelve abreast.

## V.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass  
 Never was !  
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-  
 spreads  
 And embeds  
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
 Stock or stone—

## VI.

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and  
 woe  
 Long ago ;

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread  
of shame

Struck them tame;  
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold  
Bought and sold.

## VII.

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
On the plains,  
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
Overscored,  
While the patching houseleek's head of  
blossom winks  
Through the chinks—

## VIII.

Marks the basement whence a tower in  
ancient time  
Sprang sublime,  
And a burning ring all round, the chariots  
traced  
As they raced  
And the monarch and his minions and his  
dames  
Viewed the games.

## IX.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured  
eve  
Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece  
     In such peace,  
 And the slopes and rills in undistinguished  
     gray  
         Melt away—

## X.

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair  
     Waits me there  
 In the turret, whence the charioteers caught  
     soul  
         For the goal,  
 When the king looked, where she looks  
     now, breathless, dumb  
         Till I come.

## XI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
     Far and wide,  
 All the mountains topped with temples, all  
     the glades'  
         Colonnades,  
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and  
     then,  
         All the men !

## XII.

When I do come, she will speak not, she  
     will stand,  
         Either hand

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first  
embrace

    Of my face,

Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and  
speech

    Each on each.

### XIII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
    South and north.

And they built their gods' a brazen pillar  
high

    As the sky,

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full  
force—

    Gold, or course.

### XIV.

Oh, heart ! oh, blood that freezes, blood that  
burns !

    Earth's returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !

    Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and  
the rest.

    Love is best !

## SONG.

## I.

NAY but you, who do not love her,  
Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?  
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her ?  
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,  
And this last fairest tress of all,  
So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

## II.

Because, you spend your lives in praising ;  
To praise, you search the wide world  
over ;  
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,  
If earth holds aught—speak truth—above  
her ?  
Above this tress, and this I touch  
But cannot praise, I love so much !

## A LOVER'S QUARREL.

## I.

OH, what a dawn of day !  
How the March sun feels like May !  
    All is blue again  
    After last night's rain,  
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.  
    Only, my Love's away !  
I'd as lief that the blue were gray.

## II.

Runnels, which rillets swell,  
Must be dancing down the dell  
    With a foamy head  
    On the beryl bed  
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell :  
    Each with a tale to tell,  
Could my Love but attend as well.

## III.

Dearest, three months ago !  
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—  
    When the wind would edge  
    In and in his wedge,  
In, as far as the point could go—  
    Not to our ingle, though,  
Where we loved each the other so !

## IV.

Laughs with so little cause !  
We devised games out of straws.  
    We would try and trace  
    One another's face  
In the ash, as an artist draws ;  
    Free on each other's flaws,  
How we chattered like two church daws !

## V.

What's in the "Times"?—a scold  
At the emperor deep and cold ;  
    He has taken a bride  
    To his gruesome side,  
That's as fair as himself is bold :  
    There they sit ermine-stoled,  
And she powders her hair with gold.

## VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !  
Miles and miles of gold and green  
    Where the sun-flowers blow  
    In a solid glow,  
And to break now and then the screen—  
    Black neck and eyeballs keen,  
Up a wild horse leaps between !

## VII.

Try, will our table turn ?  
Lay your hands there light, and yearn

Till the yearning slips  
 Thro' the finger tips  
 In a fire which a few discern,  
 And a very few feel burn,  
 And the rest, they may live and learn !

## VIII.

Then we would up and pace,  
 For a change, about the place,  
 Each with arm o'er neck.  
 'Tis our quarter-deck,  
 We are seamen in woeful case.  
 Help in the ocean-space !  
 Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

## IX.

See, how she looks now, drest  
 In a sledging-cap and vest.  
 'Tis a huge fur cloak—  
 Like a reindeer's yoke  
 Falls the lappet along the breast :  
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,  
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

## X.

Teach me to flirt a fan  
 As the Spanish ladies can,  
 Or I tint your lip  
 With a burn't stick's tip

And you turn into such a man !

Just the two spots that span  
Half the bill of the young male swan.

## XI.

Dearest, three months ago  
When the mesmeriser Snow

With his hand's first sweep  
Put the earth to sleep,

'Twas a time when the heart could show  
All—how was earth to know,  
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro !

## XII.

Dearest, three months ago  
When we loved each other so,  
Lived and loved the same  
Till an evening came

When a shaft from the Devil's bow  
Pierced to our ingle-glow,  
And the friends were friend and foe !

## XIII.

Not from the heart beneath—

'Twas a bubble born of breath,  
Neither sneer nor vaunt,  
Nor reproach nor taunt.

See a word, how it severeth !

Oh, power of life and death  
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith :

## XIV.

Woman, and will you cast  
 For a word, quite off at last,  
     Me, your own, your you,—  
     Since, as Truth is true,  
 I was you all the happy past—  
     Me do you leave aghast  
 With the memories we amassed ?

## XV.

Love, if you knew the light,  
 That your soul casts in my sight,  
     How I look to you  
     For the pure and true,  
 And the beauteous and the right,—  
     Bear with a moment's spite  
 When a mere mote threatens the white !

## XVI.

What of a hasty word ?  
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred  
     By a worm's pin-prick  
     Where its roots are quick ?  
 See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred  
     Ear, when a straw is heard  
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

## XVII.

Foul be the world or fair,  
 More or less, how can I care ?

'Tis the world the same  
 For my praise or blame,  
 And endurance is easy there.  
 Wrong' in the one thing rare—  
 Oh, it is hard to bear !

## XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close,  
 When the almond-blossom blows ;  
 We shall have the word  
 In that minor third  
 There is none but the cuckoo knows—  
 Heaps of the guelder-rose !  
 I must bear with it, I suppose.

## XIX.

Could but November come,  
 Were the noisy birds struck dumb  
 At the warning slash  
 Of his driver's-lash—  
 I would laugh like the valiant Thumb  
 Facing the castle glum  
 And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

## XX.

Then, were the world well stript  
 Of the gear wherein equipped  
 We can stand apart,  
 Heart dispense with heart

In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—  
    Oh, the world's hangings ripped,  
We were both in a bare-walled crypt !

## XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry  
“ But one freezes here ! and why ?  
    When a heart as chill  
        At my own would thrill  
Back to life, and its fires out-fly ?  
    Heart, shall we live or die ?  
The rest, . . . settle it by and by ! ”

## XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,  
And forgive me as before.  
    Just at twelve o'clock  
        I shall hear her knock  
In the worst of a storm's uproar—  
    I shall pull her through the door—  
I shall have her for evermore !

## FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave !  
 You need not clap your torches to my face.  
 Zooks, what's to blame ? you think you see a  
 monk !

What, it's past midnight, and you go the  
 rounds,  
 And here you catch me at an alley's end  
 Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar.  
 The Carmine's my cloister : hunt it up,  
 Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,  
 Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong  
 hole,

And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,  
 Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him com-  
 pany !

Aha, you know your betters ? Then, you'll  
 take  
 Your hand away that's fiddling on my  
 throat,  
 And please to know me likewise. Who am  
 I ?

Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend  
 Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how  
 d'ye call ?

Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,  
 In the house that caps the corner. Boh !  
 you were best !

Remember and tell me, the day you're  
hanged,  
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe !  
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves  
Pick up a manner nor discredit you.  
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the  
streets  
And count fair prize what comes into their  
net ?  
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is !  
Just such a face ! why, sir, you make amends.  
Lord ! I'm not angry ! Bid your hangdogs  
go  
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health  
Of the munificent House that harbours me  
(And many more beside, lads ! more beside !)  
And all's come square again. I'd like his  
face—  
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door  
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave  
that holds  
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair  
With one hand ("look you, now," as who  
should say)  
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped !  
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,  
A wood-coal or the like ? or you should see !  
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.  
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,  
You know them and they take you ? like  
enough !

I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—  
'Tell you I liked your looks at very first.  
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to  
haunch.  
Here's spring come, and the nights one  
makes up bands  
To roam the town and sing out carnival,  
And I've been three weeks shut within my  
mew,  
A-painting for the great man, saints and  
saints  
And saints again. I could not paint all  
night—  
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh  
air.  
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,  
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whists  
of song,—  
*Flower o' the broom,*  
*Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!*  
*Flower o' the quince,*  
*I let Lisa go, and what good's in life since?*  
*Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they*  
went.  
Scarce had they turned the corner when a  
titter,  
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—  
three slim shapes—  
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir,  
flesh and blood,  
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,  
All the bed furniture—a dozen knots,  
There was a ladder ! down I let myself,  
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and  
so dropped,  
And after them. I came up with the fun  
Hard by St. Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—  
*Flower o' the rose,*  
*If I've been merry, what matter who knows?*  
And so as I was stealing back again  
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep  
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work  
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast  
With his great round stone to subdue the  
flesh,  
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see !  
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake  
your head—  
Mine's shaved,—a monk, you say—the sting's  
in that !  
If Master Cosimo announced himself,  
Mum's the word naturally ; but a monk !  
Come, what am I a beast for ? tell us, now !  
I was a baby when my mother died  
And father died and left me in the street.  
I starved there, God knows how, a year or  
two  
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and  
shucks,  
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day  
My stomach being empty as your hat,

The wind doubled me up and down I went.  
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,  
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)  
And so along the wall, over the bridge,  
By the straight cut to the convent. Six  
words, there,  
While I stood munching my first bread that  
month :  
“ So, boy, you’re minded,” quoth the good  
fat father  
Wiping his own mouth, ‘twas refection-  
time,—  
“ To quit this very miserable world ?  
Will you renounce” . . . The mouthful of  
bread ? thought I ;  
By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of  
me ;  
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed.  
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,  
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici  
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years  
old.  
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,  
‘Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,  
The warm serge and the rope that goes all  
round,  
And day-long blessed idleness beside !  
“ Let’s see what the urchin’s fit for”—that  
came next.  
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.  
Such a to-do ! they tried me with their books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure  
waste !

*Flower o' the clove,*  
*All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love !*  
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the  
streets

Eight years together, as my fortune was,  
Watching folk's faces to know who will  
fling

The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he  
desires,  
And who will curse or kick him for his  
pains—

Which gentleman processional and fine,  
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,  
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch  
The droppings of the wax to sell again,  
Or holla for the Eight and have him  
whipped,—

How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which  
lets drop

His bone from the heap of offal in the  
street !

—The soul and sense of him grow sharp  
alike,

He learns the look of things, and none the  
less

For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.  
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,  
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use :  
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,

Scrawled them within the antiphonary's  
marge,  
Joined legs and arms to the long music-  
notes,  
Found nose and eyes and chin for A's  
and B's,  
And made a string of pictures of the world  
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,  
On the wall, the bench, the door. The  
monks looked black.  
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out,  
d'ye say?  
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.  
What if at last we get our man of parts,  
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolesse  
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up  
fine  
And put the front on it that ought to be!"  
And hereupon they bade me daub away.  
Thank you! my head being crammed, their  
walls a blank,  
Never was such prompt disengaging.  
First, every sort of monk, the black and  
white,  
I drew them, fat and lean: then folks at  
church,  
From good old gossips waiting to confess  
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-  
ends,—  
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,  
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there

With the little children round him in a row  
Of admiration, half for his beard and half  
For that white anger of his victim's son  
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,  
Signing himself with the other because of  
Christ

(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this  
After the passion of a thousand years)  
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head  
Which the intense eyes looked through, came  
at eve

On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,  
Her pair of ear-rings and a bunch of flowers  
The brute took growling, prayed, and then  
was gone.

I painted all, then cried " 'tis ask and have—  
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder  
flat,

And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.  
The monks closed in a circle and praised  
loud

Till checked, (taught what to see and not to  
see,

Being simple bodies) "that's the very man!  
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!  
That woman's like the Prior's niece who  
comes

To care about his asthma: it's the life!"  
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and  
funked—

Their betters took their turn to see and say:

The Prior and the learned pulled a face  
And stopped all that in no time. "How?  
what's here?"

Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!  
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true  
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!  
Your business is not to catch men with show,  
With homage to the perishable clay,  
But lift them over it, ignore it all,  
Make them forget there's such a thing as  
flesh.

Your business is to paint the souls of men—  
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no it's  
not . . .

It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—  
(In that shape when you die it leaves your  
mouth)

It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the  
soul!

Give us no more of body than shows soul.  
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising  
God!

That sets you praising,—why not stop with  
him?

Why put all thoughts of praise out of our  
heads

With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?  
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!  
Rub all out, try at it a second time.

Oh, that white smallish female with the  
breasts,

She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—

Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off—

Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?  
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body  
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further  
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does  
for white

When what you put for yellow's simply black,

And any sort of meaning looks intense  
When all beside itself means and looks nought.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,  
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,  
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,  
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,  
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty

You can't discover if it means hope, fear,  
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?  
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,

Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?

Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—  
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)  
If you get simple beauty and nought else,  
You get about the best thing God invents,—

That's somewhat. And you'll find the soul  
you have missed,  
Within yourself when you return Him thanks !  
" Rub all out !" well, well, there's my life,  
in short,  
And so the thing has gone on ever since.  
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken  
bounds—  
You should not take a fellow eight years old  
And make him swear to never kiss the  
girls—  
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—  
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-  
house !  
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in  
front—  
Those great rings serve more purposes than  
just  
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse !  
And yet the old schooling sticks—the old  
grave eyes  
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,  
The heads shake still—" It's Art's decline,  
my son !  
You're not of the true painters, great and  
old :  
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find :  
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer.  
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the  
third !"  
*Flower o' the pine,*

*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll  
stick to mine!*

I'm not the third, then : bless us, they must  
know !

Don't you think they're the likeliest to  
know,

They, with their Latin ? so I swallow my  
rage,

Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, a <sup>A</sup> paint

To please them—sometimes do, and som  
times don't,

For, doing most, there's pretty sure to cor  
A turn—some warm eve finds me at <sup>the</sup> saints—

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—  
(*Flower o' the peach,* \*)

*Death for us all, and his own life for each !*)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs  
o'er,

The world and life's too big to pass for a  
dream,

And I do these wild things in sheer despite,  
And play the fooleries you catch me at,

In pure rage ! the old mill-horse, out at  
grass

After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,  
Although the miller does not preach to him  
The only good of grass is to make chaff.

What would men have ? Do they like  
grass or no—

May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing

Settled for ever one way: as it is  
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.  
You don't like what you only like too much,  
You do like what, if given you at your word,

You find abundantly detestable.  
For me, I think I speak as I was taught—  
I always see the Garden and God there  
A-making man's wife — and, my lesson learned,

The value and significance of flesh,  
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterward.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.  
But see, now—why, I see as certainly  
As that the morning-star's about to shine,  
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here

Comes to our convent, studies what I do,  
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop—  
His name is Guidi — he'll not mind the monks—

They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—

He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,  
I hope so—though I never live so long,  
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!

You speak no Latin more than I, belike—

However, you're my man, you've seen the  
world

—The beauty and the wonder and the  
power,

The shapes of things, their colours, lights  
and shades,

Changes, surprises,—and God made it all !

—For what? do you feel thankful, ay or no,  
For this fair town's face, yonder river's  
line,

The mountain round it and the sky above,  
Much more the figures of man, woman,  
child,

These are the frame to? What's it all  
about?

To be passed o'er, despised? or dwelt upon,  
Wondered at? oh, this last of course, you  
say.

But why not do as well as say,—paint these  
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?  
God's works—paint anyone, and count it  
crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, " His  
works

Are here already—nature is complete:  
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you  
can't)

There's no advantage! you must beat her,  
then."

For, don't you mark, we're made so that we  
love

First when we see them painted, things we  
have passed  
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see ;  
And so they are better, painted—better to  
us,  
Which is the same thing. Art was given  
for that—  
God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed,  
now,  
Your cullion's hanging face ? A bit of chalk,  
And trust me but you should though ! How  
much more,  
If I drew higher things with the same truth !  
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,  
Interpret God to all of you ! oh, oh,  
It makes me mad to see what men shall do  
And we in our graves ! This world's no  
blot for us,  
Nor blank—it means intensely, and means  
good :  
To find its meaning in my meat and drink.  
“ Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer,”  
Strikes in the Prior ! “ when your meaning's  
plain  
It does not say to folks—remember matins—  
Or, mind you fast next Friday.” Why, for  
this  
What need of art at all ? A skull and bones,  
Two bits of stick nailed cross-wise, or,  
what's best,

A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.  
I painted a St. Laurence six months since  
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style.  
“ How looks my painting, now the scaffold’s  
down ? ”

I ask a brother : “ Hugely,” he returns—  
“ Already not one phiz of your three slaves  
That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,  
But’s scratched and prodded to our heart’s  
content,

The pious people have so eased their own  
When coming to say prayers there in a rage.  
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.  
Expect another job this time next year,  
For pity and religion grow i’ the crowd—  
Your painting serves its purpose ! ” Hang  
the fools !

—That is—you’ll not mistake an idle word  
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,  
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns  
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine !  
Oh, the church knows ! don’t misreport me,  
now !

It’s natural a poor monk out of bounds  
Should have his apt word to excuse himself :  
And hearken how I plot to make amends.  
I have bethought me ; I shall paint a piece  
. . . There’s for you ! Give me six months,  
then go, see  
Something in Sant’ Ambrogio’s . . . (bless  
the nuns !

They want a cast of my office) I shall paint  
 God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,  
 Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,  
 Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet  
 As puff on puff of grated erris-root  
 When ladies crowd to church at mid-  
 summer.

And then in the front, of course a saint or  
 two—

Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,  
 Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and  
 white

The convent's friends and gives them a long  
 day,

And Job, I must have him there past mistake,  
 The man of Uz, (and Us without the z.

Painters who need his patience.) Well, all  
 these

Secured at their devotions, up shall come  
 Out of a corner when you least expect,  
 As one by a dark stair into a great light,  
 Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—  
 Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I'm the  
 man!

Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?  
 I, caught up with my monk's things by  
 mistake,

My old serge gown and rope that goes all  
 round,

I, in this presence, this pure company!  
 Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?

Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing  
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so  
fast!"

—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—  
He made you and devised you, after all,  
Though he's none of you! Could Saint  
John there draw—

His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?  
We come to brother Lippo for all that,  
*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile—  
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face  
Under the cover of a hundred wings  
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're  
gay

And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,  
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops  
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off  
To some safe bench behind, not letting go  
The palm of her, the little lily thing  
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,  
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I  
would say.

And so all's saved for me, and for the church  
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months  
hence!

Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights,  
no lights!

The street's hushed, and I know my own  
way back—

Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning.  
Zooks!

## ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND.

## I.

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou  
 Who art all truth and who dost love me now  
     As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to  
     say—  
 Should'st love so truly and could'st love me  
     still  
 A whole long life through, had but love its  
     will,  
 Would death that leads me from thee  
     brook delay !

## II.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand  
 Would never let mine go, thy heart withstand  
     The beating of my heart to reach its place.  
 When should I look for thee and feel thee  
     gone?  
 When cry for the old comfort and find none?  
     Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy face.

## III.

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so ! might I  
     save,  
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave  
     Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.  
 It is not to be granted. But the soul

Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves  
 that whole ;  
 Vainly the flesh fades—soul makes all  
 things new.

## IV.

And 'twould not be because my eye grew dim  
 Thou could'st not find the love there, thanks  
 to Him

Who never is dishonoured in the spark  
 He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade  
 Remember whence it sprang nor be afraid  
 While that burns on, though all the rest  
 grow dark.

## V.

So, how thou would'st be perfect, white and  
 clean  
 Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne  
 Alike, this body given to show it by !  
 Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's  
 abyss,  
 What plaudits from the next world after  
 this,  
 Could'st thou repeat a stroke and gain the  
 sky !

## VI.

And is it not the bitterer to think  
 That, disengage our hands and thou wilt  
 sink  
 Although thy love was love in very deed ?

I know that nature ! Pass a festive day,  
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away  
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

## VII.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell ;  
If old things remain old things all is well,  
For thou art grateful as becomes man best :  
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,  
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon  
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

## VIII.

I seem to see ! we meet and part : 'tis brief :  
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,  
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank ;  
That is a portrait of me on the wall—  
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call ;  
And for all this, one little hour's to thank.

## IX.

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,  
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,  
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare

Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,  
 "Therefore she is immortally my bride,  
 Chance cannot change that love, nor time  
 impair.

## X.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,  
 I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,  
 Look from my path when, mimicking the  
 same,  
 The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and  
 gone?  
 —Where was it till the sunset? where anon  
 It will be at the sunrise! what's to  
 blame?"

## XI.

Is it so helpful to thee? canst thou take  
 The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,  
 Put gently by such efforts at a beam?  
 Is the remainder of the way so long  
 Thou need'st the little solace, thou the  
 strong?  
 Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze  
 and dream!

## XII.

"—Ah, but the fresher faces! Is it true,"  
 Thou'l ask, "some eyes are beautiful and  
 new?  
 Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp  
 such wealth?

And if a man would press his lips to lips  
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there  
slips  
The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth ?

## XIII.

" It cannot change the love kept still for Her,  
Much more than, such a picture to prefer  
Passing a day with, to a room's bare side.  
The painted form takes nothing she  
possessed,  
Yet while the Titian's Venus lies at rest  
A man looks. Once more, what is there  
to chide ? "

## XIV.

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,  
My own self sell myself, my hand attach  
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—  
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,  
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,  
Thy man's truth I was bold to bid God  
see !

## XV.

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all thou  
canst  
Away to the new faces—disentranced—  
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more,  
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint—  
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print  
Image and superscription once they bore !

## XVI.

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—  
It all comes to the same thing at the end,  
Since mine thou wast, mine art, and mine  
shalt be,  
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum  
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come  
Back to the heart's place here I keep for  
thee !

## XVII.

Only, why should it be with stain at all ?  
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,  
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?  
Why need the other women know so much  
And talk together, " Such the look and such  
The smile he used to love with, then as  
now ! "

## XVIII.

Might I die last and shew thee ! Should  
I find  
Such hardship in the few years left behind,  
If free to take and light my lamp, and go  
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit  
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it  
The better that they are so blank, I know !

## XIX.

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er  
Within my mind each look, get more and  
more

By heart each word, too much to learn at  
first,  
And join thee all the fitter for the pause  
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were  
cause  
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I  
durst!.

## xx.

And yet thou art the nobler of us two.  
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not  
do,  
Outstripping my ten small steps with one  
stride?  
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—  
Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask—  
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy  
pride.

## xxi.

Pride?—when those eyes forestal the life  
behind  
The death I have to go through!—when I  
find,  
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!  
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me  
fast  
Until the little minute's sleep is past  
And I wake saved.—And yet, it will not  
be!

## A SERENADE AT THE VILLA.

## I.

THAT was I, you heard last night  
When there rose no moon at all,  
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight  
Tent of heaven, a planet small :  
Life was dead, and so was light.

## II.

Not a twinkle from the fly,  
Not a glimmer from the worm.  
When the crickets stopped their cry,  
When the owls forbore a term,  
You heard music ; that was I.

## III.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,  
Sultrily suspired for proof :  
In at heaven and out again,  
Lightning !—where it broke the roof,  
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

## IV.

What they could my words expressed,  
O my love, my all, my one !

Singing helped the verses best,  
 And when singing's best was done,  
 To my lute I left the rest.

## V.

So wore night ; the east was gray,  
 White the broad-faced hemlock flowers ;  
 Soon would come another day ;  
 Ere its first of heavy hours  
 Found me, I had past away.

## VI.

What became of all the hopes,  
 Words and song and lute as well ?  
 Say, this struck you—“ When life gropes  
 Feebly for the path where fell  
 Light last on the evening slopes. ”

## VII.

“ One friend in that path shall be  
 To secure my steps from wrong ;  
 One to count night day for me,  
 Patient through the watches long,  
 Serving most with none to see.”

## VIII.

Never say—as something bodes—  
 “ So the worst has yet a worse !  
 When life halts 'neath double loads,  
 Better the task-master's curse  
 Than such music on the roads !

## IX.

“ When no moon succeeds the sun,  
Nor can pierce the midnight’s tent  
Any star, the smallest one,  
While some drops, where lightning went,  
Show the final storm begun—

## X.

“ When the fire-fly hides its spot,  
When the garden-voices fail  
In the darkness thick and hot,  
Shall another voice avail,  
That shape be where those are not?

## XI.

“ Has some plague a longer lease  
Proffering its help uncouth?  
Can’t one even die in peace?  
As one shuts one’s eyes on youth,  
Is that face the last one sees?”

## XII.

Oh, how dark your villa was,  
Windows fast and obdurate!  
How the garden grudged me grass  
Where I stood—the iron gate  
Ground its teeth to let me pass!





"From street to street he piped advancing,  
And step 'or step they followed dancing."

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN.

A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER)

## I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,  
By famous Hanover city ;  
The river Weser, deep and wide,  
Washes its wall on the southern side ;  
A pleasanter spot you never spied ;  
But, when begins my ditty,  
Almost five hundred years ago,  
To see the townsfolk suffer so  
From vermin, was a pity.

## II.

Rats !  
They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,  
And bit the babies in the cradles,  
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
And licked the soup from the cook's own  
ladles,  
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
And even spoiled the women's chats,  
By drowning their speaking  
With shrieking and squeaking  
In fifty different sharps and flats.

## III.

At last the people in a body  
To the Town Hall came flocking :  
“ ‘Tis clear,” cried they, “ our Mayor’s a  
noddy ;  
“ And as for our Corporation—shocking  
“ To think we buy new gowns lined with  
ermine  
“ For dolts that can’t or won’t determine  
“ What’s best to rid us of our vermin !  
“ You hope, because you’re old and obese,  
“ To find in the furry civic robe ease ?  
“ Rouse up, Sirs ! Give your brains a  
racking  
“ To find the remedy we’re lacking,  
“ Or, sure as fate, we’ll send you packing ! ”  
At this the Mayor and Corporation  
Quaked with mighty consternation.

## IV.

An hour they sate in council,  
At length the Mayor broke silence  
“ For a guilder I’d my ermine gown sell ;  
“ I wish I were a mile hence !  
“ It’s easy to bid one rack one’s brain—  
“ I’m sure my poor head aches again  
“ I’ve scratched it so, and all in vain.  
“ Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! ”  
Just as he said this, what should hap  
At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?

“ Bless us,” cried the Mayor, “ what’s that ? ”  
 (With the Corporation as he sat,  
 Looking little though wondrous fat ;  
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister  
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous  
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
 “ Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?  
 “ Anything like the sound of a rat  
 “ Makes my heart go pit-a-pat ! ”

## v.

“ Come in ! ”— the Mayor cried, looking  
 bigger :  
 And in did come the strangest figure !  
 His queer long coat from heel to head  
 Was half of yellow and half of red ;  
 And he himself was tall and thin,  
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,  
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
 But lips where smiles went out and in—  
 There was no guessing his kith and kin !  
 And nobody could enough admire  
 The tall man and his quaint attire :  
 Quoth one : “ It’s as my great-grandsire,  
 “ Starting up the Trump of Doom’s tone,  
 “ Had walked this way from his painted  
 tombstone ! ”

## VI.

He advanced to the council-table :  
And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm  
able,  
" By means of a secret charm, to draw  
" All creatures living beneath the sun,  
" That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,  
" After me so as you never saw !  
" And I chiefly use my charm  
" On creatures that do people harm,  
" The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper ;  
" And people call me the Pied Piper."  
(And here they noticed round his neck  
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,  
To match with his coat of the selfsame  
cheque ;  
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;  
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever  
straying  
As if impatient to be playing  
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
" Yet," said he, " poor piper as I am,  
" In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
" Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ;  
" I eased in Asia the Nizam  
" Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :  
" And, as for what your brain bewilders,  
" If I can rid your town of rats  
" Will you give me a thousand guilders ? "

“One? fifty thousand!”—was the exclamation  
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

## VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,  
Smiling first a little smile,  
As if he knew what magic slept  
In his quiet pipe the while;  
Then, like a musical adept,  
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled  
Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled;  
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,  
You heard as if an army muttered;  
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;  
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;  
And out of the houses the rats came  
tumbling.  
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,  
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
Cocking tales and pricking whiskers,  
Families by tens and dozens,  
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
Followed the Piper for their lives.  
From street to street he piped advancing,  
And step for step they followed dancing,  
Until they came to the river Weser  
Wherein all plunged and perished

—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
 Swam across and lived to carry  
 (As he the manuscript he cherished)  
 To Rat-land home his commentary,  
 Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the  
 pipe,  
 “I heard the sound as of scraping tripe,  
 “And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
 “Into a cider-press’s gripe :  
 “And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
 “And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
 “And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
 “And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks :  
 “And it seemed as if a voice  
 “(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
 “Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice !  
 “The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !  
 “So munch on, crunch on, take your  
 nuncheon,  
 “Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !  
 “And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
 “All ready staved, like a great sun shone  
 “Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
 “Just as methought it said, Come, bore me !  
 “—I found the Weser rolling o’er me.”

## VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple ;  
 “Go,” cried the Mayor, “and get long poles !  
 “Poke out the nests and block up the holes !

"Consult with carpenters and builders,  
"And leave in our town not even a trace  
"Of the rats!"—when suddenly up the face  
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand  
guilders!"

## ix.

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;  
So did the Corporation too.  
For council dinners made rare havock  
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;  
And half the money would replenish  
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.  
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!  
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing  
wink,  
"Our business was done at the river's brink;  
"We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,  
"And what's dead can't come to life, I think,  
"So, friend, we're not the folk's to shrink  
"From the duty of giving you something  
for drink,  
"And a matter of money to put in your poke;  
"But, as for the guilders, what we spoke  
"Of them, as you very well know, was in  
joke.  
"Beside, our losses have made us thrifty;  
"A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

## X.

The piper's face fell, and he cried,  
 "No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !  
 "I've promised to visit by dinner time  
 "Bagdat, and accept the prime  
 "Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
 "For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,  
 "Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—  
 "With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
 "With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver !  
 "And folks who put me in a passion  
 "May find me pipe to another fashion."

## XI.

"How ?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I'll  
 brook  
 "Being worse treated than a Cook ?  
 "Insulted by a lazy ribald  
 "With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?  
 "You threaten us, fellow ! Do your worst,  
 "Blow your pipe there till you burst !"

## XII.

Once more he stept in to the street ; . . .  
 And to his lips again  
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;  
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning  
 Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling, that seemed like a  
bustling  
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and  
hustling,  
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes  
clattering,  
Little hands clapping, and little tongues  
chattering,  
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley  
is scattering,  
Out came the children running.  
All the little boys and girls,  
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,  
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
The wonderful music with shouting and  
laughter.

## XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
Unable to move a step, or cry  
To the children merrily skipping by—  
And could only follow with the eye  
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.  
But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,  
As the Piper turned from the High Street  
To where the Weser rolled its waters  
Right in the way of their sons and  
daughters !

However he turned from South to West,  
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,  
And after him the children pressed ;  
Great was the joy in every breast.  
“ He never can cross that mighty top !  
“ He’s forced to let the piping drop,  
“ And we shall see our children stop ! ”  
When, lo, as they reached the mountain’s  
side,  
A wondrous portal opened wide,  
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;  
And the Piper advanced and the children  
followed,  
And when all were in to the very last,  
The door in the mountain side shut fast.  
Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,  
And could not dance the whole of the way ;  
And in after years, if you would blame  
His sadness, he was used to say,—  
“ It’s dull in our town since my playmates  
left !  
“ I can’t forget that I’m bereft  
“ Of all the pleasant sights they see,  
“ Which the Piper also promised me ;  
“ For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,  
“ Joining the town and just at hand,  
“ Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,  
“ And flowers put forth a fairer hue,  
“ And everything was strange and new ;  
“ The sparrows were brighter than peacocks  
here,

"And their dogs outran our fallow deer,  
"And honey-bees had lost their stings,  
"And horses were born with eagles' wings;  
"And just as I became assured  
"My lame foot would be speedily cured,  
"The music stopped and I stood still,  
"And found myself outside the Hill,  
"Left alone against my will,  
"To go now limping as before,  
"And never hear of that country more!"

## xiv.

Alas, alas for Hamelin !

There came into many a burgher's pate  
A text which says, that Heaven's Gate  
Opes to the Rich at as easy a rate  
As the needle's eye takes a camel in !  
The Mayor sent East, West, North, and  
South  
To offer the Piper by word of mouth,  
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,  
Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
If he'd only return the way he went,  
And bring the children behind him.  
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,  
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,  
They made a decree that lawyers never  
Should think their records dated duly  
If, after the day of the month and year,  
These words did not as well appear,  
"And so long after what happened here-

" On the Twenty-second of July,  
" Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six :"  
And the better in memory to fix  
The place of the Children's last retreat,  
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—  
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.  
Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern

To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;  
But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,  
And on the Great Church Window painted  
The same, to make the world acquainted  
How their children were stolen away ;  
And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say  
That in Transylvania there's a tribe  
Of alien people that ascribe  
The outlandish ways and dress  
On which their neighbours lay such stress,  
To their fathers and mothers having risen  
Out of some subterranean prison  
Into which they were trepanned  
Long time ago in a mighty band  
Out of Hamelin town is Brunswick land,  
But how or why, they don't understand.

## xv.

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers  
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers :

And, whether they pipe us free, fróm rats  
or from mice,  
If we've promised them aught, let us keep  
our promise.

### A PRETTY WOMAN.

#### I.

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,  
And the blue eye  
Dear and dewy,  
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

#### II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,  
And enfold you,  
Ay, and hold you,  
And so keep you what they make you,  
Sweet !

#### III.

You like us for a glance, you know—  
For a word's sake,  
Or a sword's sake,  
All's the same, whate'er the chance, you  
know.

## IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—  
    You and youth too,  
    Eyes and mouth too,  
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

## V.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—  
    Sing and say for,  
    Watch and pray for,  
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet.

## VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,  
    Though we prayed you,  
    Paid you, brayed you  
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet.

## VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there—  
    Be its beauty  
    Its sole duty !  
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there !

## VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,  
    Who shall wonder  
    That I ponder  
A conclusion? I will try it there.

## IX.

As,—why must one, for the love forgone,  
 Scout mere liking ?  
 Thunder-striking  
 Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for,  
 gone !

## X.

Why with beauty, needs there money be—  
 Love with liking ?  
 Crush the fly-king  
 In his gauze, because no honey bee ?

## XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,  
 If love grew there  
 'Twould undo there  
 All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet ?

## XII.

Is the creature too imperfect, say ?  
 Would you mend it  
 And so end it ?  
 Since not all addition perfects aye !

## XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,  
 Just perfection—  
 Whence, rejection  
 Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps ?

## XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once  
 Into tinder,  
 And so hinder  
 Sparks from kindling all the place at once ?

## XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her ?  
 Your love-fancies !—  
 A sick man sees      „  
 Truer, when ! is hot eyes roll on her !

## XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the  
 rose,—  
 Plucks a mould-flower  
 For his gold flower,  
 Uses fine things that efface the rose.

## XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,  
 Precious metals  
 Ape the petals,—  
 Last, some old king locks it up, morose !

## XVIII.

Then, how grace a rose ? I know a way !  
 Leave it rather.  
 Must you gather ?  
 Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away !

## A LIGHT WOMAN.

## I.

So far as our story approaches the end,  
Which do you pity the most of us three?—  
My friend, or the mistress of my friend  
With her wanton eyes, or me?

## II.

My friend was already too good to lose,  
And seemed in the way of improvement  
yet,  
When she crossed his path with her hunting-  
noose  
And over him drew her net.

## III.

When I saw him tangled in her toils,  
A shame, said I, if she adds just him  
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,  
The hundredth, for a whim!

## IV.

And before my friend be wholly hers,  
How easy to prove to him, I said,  
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,  
Though she snaps at the wren instead!

## V.

So I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,  
 My hand sought hers as in earnest need,  
 And round she turned for my noble sake,  
 And gave me herself indeed.

## VI.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,  
 The wren is he, with his maiden face.  
 —You look away and your lip is curled?  
 Patience, a moment's space!

## VII.

For see—my friend goes shaking and white;  
 He eyes me as the basilisk:  
 I have turned, it appears, his day to night,  
 Eclipsing his sun's disc.

## VIII.

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:  
 “ Though I love her—that he comprehends—  
 One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)  
 And be loyal to one's friends ! ”

## IX.

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame  
 As a pear hung basking over a wall;

Just a touch to try and off it came;  
 'Tis mine,—can I let it fall?

## X.

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst!  
 Were it thrown in the road, would the  
     case assist?  
 'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst  
     When I gave its stalk a twist.

## XI.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see—  
     What I soon shall seem to his love, you  
         guess.  
 What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?  
     No hero, I confess.

## XII.

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,  
     And matter enough to save one's own.  
 Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals  
     He played with for bits of stone!

## XIII.

One likes to show the truth for the truth;  
     That the woman was light is very true:  
 But suppose she says,—never mind that  
     youth—  
     What wrong have I done to you?

## XIV.

Well, any how, here the story stays,  
 So far at least as I understand ;  
 And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,  
 Here's a subject made to your hand !

## LOVE IN A LIFE.

## I.

Room after room,  
 I hunt the house through  
 We inhabit together.  
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt  
     find her,  
 Next time, herself !—not the trouble behind  
     her  
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume !  
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath  
     blossomed anew,—  
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of  
     her feather.

## II.

Yet the day wears,  
 And door succeeds door ;  
 I try the fresh fortune—  
 Range the wide house from the wing to the  
     centre.  
 Still the same chance ! she goes out as I  
     enter.

Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?  
 But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore.  
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune !

## LIFE IN A LOVE.

ESCAPE me ?

Never—  
Beloved !

While I am I, and you are you,  
 So long as the world contains us both.  
 Me the loving and you the loth,  
 While the one eludes, must the other pursue.  
 My life is a fault at last, I fear—  
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed !  
 Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed—  
 But what if I fail of my purpose here ?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,  
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,  
 And baffled, get up to begin again,—  
 So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.  
 While, look but once from your farthest bound,  
 At me so deep in the dust and dark,

No sooner the old hope drops to ground  
Than a new one, straight to the selfsame  
mark,  
I shape me—  
Ever  
Removed !

## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER.

## I.

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,  
Since now at length my fate I know,  
Since nothing all my love avails,  
Since all my life seemed meant for, fails,  
Since this was written and needs must be—  
My whole heart rises up to bless  
Your name in pride and thankfulness !  
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim  
Only a memory of the same,  
—And this beside, if you will not blame,  
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

## II.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,  
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
When pity would be softening through,  
Fixed me a breathing-while or two  
With life or death in the balance—Right !

The blood replenished me again :  
My last thought was at least not vain.  
I and my mistress, side by side  
Shall be together, breathe and ride,  
So one day more am I deified.

Who knows but the world may end to-night?

### III.

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud  
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed  
By many benedictions—sun's  
And moon's and evening-star's at once—

And so, you, looking and loving best,  
Conscious grew, your passion drew  
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too  
Down on you, near and yet more near,  
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here !—  
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear !  
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

### IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul  
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll  
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.  
Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry ?  
Had I said that, had I done this,  
So might I gain, so might I miss.  
Might she have loved me ? just as well  
She might have hated.—who can tell ?

Where had I been now if the worst befell ?  
And here we are riding, she and I.

## V.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?  
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds ?  
We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,  
Saw other regions, cities new,  
As the world rushed by on either side.  
I thought, 'All labour, yet no less'  
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
Look at the end of work, contrast  
The petty Done, the Undone vast,  
This present of theirs with the hopeful  
past !  
I hoped she would love me. Here we  
ride.

## VI.

What hand and brain went ever paired ?  
What heart alike conceived and dared ?  
What act proved all its thought had been ?  
What will but felt the fleshly screen ?  
We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
There's many a crown for who can reach.  
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !  
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
A soldier's doing ! what atones ?  
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.  
My riding is better, by their leave.

## VII.

What does it all mean, poet? well,  
Your brain's beat into rhythm—you tell  
What we felt only; you expressed  
You hold things beautiful the best,  
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.  
'Tis something, nay 'tis much—but then,  
Have you yourself what's best for men?  
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—  
Nearer one whit your own sublime  
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?  
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

## VIII.

And you, great sculptor—so you gave  
A score of years to art, her slave,  
And that's your Venus—whence we turn  
To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce and shall I repine?  
What, man of music, you, grown gray  
With notes and nothing else to say,  
Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
"But in music we know how fashions end!"  
I gave my youth—but we ride, in fine.

## IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate  
Proposed bliss here should sublimate

My being ; had I signed the bond—  
Still one must lead some life beyond,  
—Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.  
This foot once planted on the goal,  
This glory-garland round my soul,  
Could I descry such ? Try and test !  
I sink back shuddering from the quest—  
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem  
best ?  
Now, Heaven and she are beyond this  
ride.

## X.

And yet—she has not spoke so long !  
What if Heaven be that, fair and strong  
At life's best, with our eyes upturned  
Whither life's flower is first discerned,  
We, fixed so, ever should so abide ?  
What if we still ride on, we two,  
With life for ever old yet new,;  
Changed not in kind but in degree,  
The instant made eternity,—  
And Heaven just prove that I and she  
Ride, ride together, for ever ride ?

## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE OF FANO.

## I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldest thou only leave  
 That child, when thou hast done with him,  
 for me !

Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
 Shall find performed thy special ministry  
 And time come for departure, thou, suspending  
 Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,  
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

## II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,  
 From where thou standest now, to where  
 I gaze,  
 And suddenly my head be covered o'er  
 With those wings, white above the child  
 who prays  
 Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee  
 guarding  
 Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding  
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes  
 its door !

## III.

I would not look up thither past thy head  
 Because the door opes, like that child, I  
 know,

For I should have thy gracious face instead,  
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend  
me low  
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands  
together,  
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether  
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments  
spread ?

## IV.

If this was ever granted, I w~~o~~uld rest  
. My head beneath thine, while thy healing  
hands  
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,  
. Pressing the brain, which too much thought  
expands,  
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,  
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

## V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be  
repaired !  
I think how I should view the earth and  
skies  
And sea, when once again my brow was bared  
After thy healing, with such different eyes.  
O world, as God has made it ! love is beauty :  
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.  
What further may be sought for or  
declared ?

## VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
 (Alfred, dear friend) that little child to pray,  
 Holding the little hands up, each to each  
 Pressed gently,—with his own head turned  
 away  
 Over the earth where so much lay before  
 him  
 Of work to do, though heaven was opening  
 o'er him,  
 And he was left at Fano by the beach.

## VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
 To sit and see him in his chapel there.  
 And drink his beauty to our soul's content  
 —My angel with me too : and since I care  
 For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power  
 And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent).

## VIII.

And since he did not work so earnestly  
 At all times, and has else endured some  
 wrong,—  
 I took one thought his picture struck from  
 me,  
 And spread it out, translating it to song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?  
 How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ?  
 This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

**“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.”**

[16—.]

II.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;  
 I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all  
 three ;  
 “Good speed !” cried the watch, as the gate-  
 bolts undrew ;  
 “Speed !” echoed the wall to us gallop-  
 ing through ;  
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank  
 to rest,  
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

III.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the  
 great pace  
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never  
 changing our place ;  
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths  
 tight,

Then shortened each stirrup, and set the  
    pique right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker  
    the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

## III.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we  
    drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned  
    clear ;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out  
    to see ;  
At Düsseldorf, 'twas morning as plain as  
    could be ;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard  
    the half-chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there  
    is time ! "

## IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black  
    every one,  
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping  
    past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at  
    last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its  
    spray.

## V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp  
ear bent back  
For my voice, and the other pricked out  
on his track ;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that  
glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master,  
askance !  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye  
and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

## VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris,  
“ Stay spur !  
“ Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's  
not in her,  
“ We'll remember at Aix ”—for one heard  
the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and  
staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the  
flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered  
and sank.

## VII.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in  
the sky ;



" . . . and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone."



The broad sun above laughed a pitiless  
 laugh,  
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright  
 stubble like chaff;  
 Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang  
 white,  
 And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is  
 in sight!"

## VIII.

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a  
 moment his roan  
 Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a  
 stone;  
 And there was my Roland to bear the whole  
 weight  
 Of the news which alone could save Aix  
 from her fate,  
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the  
 brim,  
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets'  
 rim.

## IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster  
 let fall,  
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and  
 all,  
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse  
 without peer;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,  
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

## X.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round  
 As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on  
 the ground,  
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of  
 mine,                          " "  
 As I poured down his throat our last measure  
 of wine,  
 Which (the burgesses voted by common  
 consent)  
 Was no more than his due who brought good  
 news from Ghent.

## A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S.

## I.

Oh, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to  
 find !  
 I can hardly misconceive you ; it would  
 prove me deaf and blind ;  
 But although I give you credit, 'tis with  
 such a heavy mind !

## II.

Here you come with your old music, and  
 here's all the good it brings.  
 What, they lived once thus at Venice, where  
 the merchants were the kings,  
 Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used  
 to wed the sea with rings?

## III.

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and  
 'tis arched by . . . what you call  
 . . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,  
 where they kept the carnival!  
 I was never out of England—it's as if I saw  
 it all!

## IV.

Did young people take their pleasure when  
 the sea was warm in May?  
 Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning  
 ever to mid-day,  
 When they made up fresh adventures for the  
 morrow, do you say?

## V.

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round  
 and lips so red,—  
 On her neck the small face buoyant, like a  
 bell-flower on its bed,  
 O'er the breast's superb abundance where a  
 man might base his head?

## VI.

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd  
 break talk off and afford  
 —She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he to  
 finger on his sword,  
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately  
 at the clavichord ?

## VII.

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,  
 sixths diminished sigh ~~on~~ sigh,  
 Told them something? Those suspensions,  
 those solutions—"Must we die?"  
 Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might  
 last! we can but try!"

## VIII.

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are  
 you still as happy?"—"Yes—and you?"  
 —"Then more kisses"—"Did I stop them,  
 when a million seemed so few?"  
 Hark—the dominant's persistence, till it  
 must be answered to!

## IX.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they  
 praised you, I dare say!  
 "Brave Galuppi! that was music! good  
 alike at grave and gay!  
 I can always leave off talking, when I hear  
 a master play."

## X.

Then they left you for their pleasure : till in  
 due time, one by one,  
 Some with lives that came to nothing, some  
 with deeds as well undone,  
 Death came tacitly and took them where  
 they never see the sun.

## XI.

But when I sit down to reason,—think to  
 take my stand nor swerve  
 Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from  
 nature's close reserve,  
 In you come with your cold music, till I  
 creep thro' every nerve.

## XII.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking  
 where a house was burned—  
 “Dust and ashes, dead and done with,  
 Venice spent what Venice earned !  
 The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a  
 soul can be discerned

## XIII.

“Yours for instance, you know physics,  
 something of geology,  
 Mathematics are your pastime ; souls shall  
 rise in their degree ;  
 Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not  
 die, it cannot be !

## XIV.

"As for Venice and its people, merely born  
 to bloom and drop,  
 Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth  
 and folly were the crop,  
 What of soul was left, I wonder, when the  
 kissing had to stop ?

## XV.

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and  
 I want the heart to scold."  
 Dear dead women, with such hair, too—  
 what's become of all the gold  
 Used to hang and brush their bosoms?  
 feel chilly and grown old.

## MEMORABILIA.

## I.

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,  
 And did he stop and speak to you?  
 And did you speak to him again?  
 How strange it seems, and new !

## II.

But you were living before that,  
 And you are living after,  
 And the memory I started at—  
 My starting moves your laughter.

## III.

I crossed a moor with a name of its own  
 And a use in the world no doubt,  
 Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone  
 'Mid the blank miles round about—

## IV.

For there I picked up on the heather  
 And there I put inside my breast  
 A moulted feather, an eagle-feather—  
 Well, I forgot the rest.

## ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,  
 No, 'my Lucrezia ; bear with me for once :  
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
 You turn your face, but does it bring your  
 heart ?  
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never  
 fear,  
 Treat his own subject after his own way,  
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
 And shut the money into this small hand  
 When next it takes mine. Will it?  
 tenderly ?  
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !

I often am much wearier than you think,  
This evening more than usual, and it seems  
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit  
Here by the window with your hand in  
mine

And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,  
Both of one mind, as married people use,  
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,  
I might get up to-morrow to my work  
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this !  
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
And mine the man's bared breast she curls  
inside.

Don't count the time lost, either ; you must  
serve

For each of the five pictures we require—  
It saves a model. So ! keep looking so—  
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds !  
—How could you ever prick those perfect  
ears,

Even to put the pearl there ! oh, so sweet—  
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his,  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no  
less !

You smile? why, there's my picture ready  
made.

There's what we painters call our harmony !  
A common grayness silvers everything,—

All in a twilight, you and I alike  
—You, at the point of your first pride in me  
(That's gone you know), but I, at every  
point ;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned  
down  
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-  
top ;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;  
The last monk leaves the garden ; days  
decrease  
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.  
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's  
hand.  
How strange now, looks the life he makes  
us lead !  
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are :  
I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !  
This chamber for example—turn your head—  
All that's behind us ! you don't understand  
Nor care to understand about my art.  
But you can hear at least when people  
speak ;  
And that cartoon, the second from the door  
—It is the thing, Love ! so such things  
should be—

Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.  
I can do with my pencil what I know,  
What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—  
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly  
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are  
judge  
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,  
And just as much they used to say in France.  
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it !  
No sketches first, no studies, that's long  
past—  
I do what many dream of all their lives—  
—Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,  
And fail in doing. I could count twenty  
such  
On twice your fingers, and not leave this  
town,  
Who strive—you don't know how the others  
strive  
To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,  
Yet do much less, so much less, some one  
says,  
(I know his name, no matter) so much less !  
Well, less is more, Lucrezia ! I am judged.  
There burns a truer light of God in them,  
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-  
up brain,  
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to  
prompt

This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand  
of mine.  
Their works drop groundward, but them-  
selves, I know,  
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to  
me,  
Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
Though they come back and cannot tell the  
world.  
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—  
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils  
too.  
I, painting from myself and to myself,  
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's  
blame  
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
His hue mistaken—what of that ? or else,  
Rightly traced and well ordered—what of  
that ?  
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his  
grasp,  
Or what's a Heaven for ? all is silver-gray  
Placid and perfect with my art—the worst !  
I know both what I want and what might  
gain—  
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
“ Had I been two, another and myself,  
Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ”  
No doubt.

Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth  
The Urbinate who died five years ago.  
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)  
Well, I can fancy how he did it all;  
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to  
see,  
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish  
him,  
Above and through his art—for it gives  
way;  
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—  
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
Its body, so to speak ! its soul is right,  
He means right—that, a child may under-  
stand.  
Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it.  
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—  
Out of me ! out of me ! And wherefore  
out?  
Had you enjoined them on me, given me  
soul,  
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.  
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I  
think—  
More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
But had you—oh, with the same perfect  
brow,  
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect  
mouth,  
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—

Had you, with these the same, but brought  
a mind !

Some women do so. Had the mouth there  
urged

"God and the glory ! never care for gain.  
The present by the future, what is that ?  
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—  
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three !"  
I might have done it for you. So it seems—  
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.  
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;  
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?  
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo ?  
In this world, who can do a thing, will not—  
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :  
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too,  
the power—

And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,  
That I am something underrated here,  
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the  
truth.

I dared not, do you know, leave home all  
day,  
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
The best is when they pass and look aside ;  
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear  
it all.

Well may they speak ! That Francis, that  
first time,

And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !  
I surely then could sometimes leave the  
ground,  
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
In that humane great monarch's golden  
look,—  
One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
Over his mouth's good mark that made the  
smile,  
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
You painting proudly with his breath on me,  
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire  
of souls  
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those  
hearts,—  
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
This in the back-ground, waiting on my  
work,  
To crown the issue with a last reward !  
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?  
And had you not grown restless—but I  
know—  
'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct  
said ;  
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray—  
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should  
tempt  
Out of the grange whose four walls make  
his world.

How could it end in any other way?  
You called me, and I came home to your  
heart.  
The triumph was to have ended there—then if  
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's  
gold,  
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!  
“Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—  
The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—”  
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge  
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
Said one day Angelo, his very self,  
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these  
years . . .  
(When the young man was flaming out his  
thoughts  
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
“Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub  
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares  
how,  
Who, were he set to plan and execute  
As you are pricked on by your popes and  
kings,  
Would bring the sweat into that brow of  
yours!”  
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.

I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,  
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line  
should go !

Ay, but the soul ! he's Rafael ! rub it out !  
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
(What he ? why, who but Michael Angelo ?  
Do you forget already words like those ?)  
If really there was such a chance, so lost,  
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more  
pleased.

Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !  
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?  
If you would sit thus by me every night  
I should work better, do you comprehend ?  
I mean that I should earn more, give you  
more.

See, it is settled dusk now ; there's a star ;  
Morello's gone, the watch-lights shew the  
wall,

The cue-owls speak the name we call them  
by.

Come from the window, Love,—come in,  
at last,

Inside the melancholy little house  
We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights  
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,  
The walls become illumined, brick from brick  
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,  
That gold of his I did cement them with !  
Let us but love each other. Must you go ?

That Cousin here again ? he waits outside ?  
Must see you—you, and not with me ?  
Those loans !  
More gaming debts to pay ? you smiled for  
that ?  
Well, let smiles buy me ! have you more to  
spend ?  
While hand and eye and something of a  
heart  
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it  
worth ?  
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
The gray remainder of the evening out,  
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
How I could paint were I but back in France,  
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,  
Not yours this time ! I want you at my side  
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—  
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
Will you ? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
I take the subjects for his corridor,  
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,  
And throw him in another thing or two  
If he demurs ; the whole should prove enough  
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
What's better and what's all I care about,  
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.  
Love, does that please you ? Ah, but what  
does he,  
The Cousin ! what does he to please you  
more ?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
I regret little, I would change still less.  
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
The very wrong to Francis! it is true  
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
And built this house and sinned, and all  
is said.

My father and my mother died of want,  
Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
How one gets rich! Let each one bear  
his lot.

They were born poor, lived poor, and poor  
they died:

And I have laboured somewhat in my  
time

And not been paid profusely. Some good  
son

Paint my two hundred pictures—let him  
try!

No doubt, there's something strikes a  
balance. Yes,

You loved me quite enough, it seems to-  
night.

This must suffice me here. What would one  
have?

In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more  
chance—

Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,  
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me  
To cover—the three first without a wife,

While I have mine ! So—still they over-  
come  
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.  
Again the Cousin's whistle ! Go, my Love.

## CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—  
CLEON the poet (from the sprinkled isles,  
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,  
And laugh their pride when the light wave  
lisps "Greece"),—  
To Protus in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :  
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.  
The master of thy galley still unlades  
Gift after gift ; they block my court at last  
And pile themselves along its portico  
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :  
And one white she-slave from the group  
dispersed  
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-  
work  
Pavement, at once my nation's work and  
gift,  
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)  
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest

Woven of sea-wools, with her two white  
hands  
Commends to me the strainer and the cup  
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !  
For so shall men remark, in such an act  
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,  
Thy recognition of the use of life ;  
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate  
To help on life in straight ways, broad  
enough  
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.  
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,  
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of  
toil,  
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,  
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim  
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,  
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's  
sake—  
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope  
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,  
Whence, all the tumult of the building  
hushed,  
Thou first of men mightst look out to the  
east.  
The vulgar saw thy tower ; thou sawest  
the sun.  
For this, I promise on thy festival  
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,

Making this slave narrate thy fortunes,  
 speak  
 Thy great words, and describe thy royal  
 face—  
 Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the  
 most  
 Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me  
 here.  
 It is as thou hast heard : in one short life  
 I, Cleon, have effected all those things  
 Thou wonderfully dost enumerate.  
 That epos on thy hundred plates of gold  
 Is mine—and also mine the little chaunt,  
 So sure to rise from every fishing-bark  
 When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their  
 nets.  
 The image of the sun-god on the phare,  
 Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;  
 The Poecile, o'er-storied its whole length,  
 As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine  
 too.  
 I know the true proportions of a man  
 And woman also, not observed before ;  
 And I have written three books on the soul,  
 Proving absurd all written hitherto,  
 And putting us to ignorance again.  
 For music,—why, I have combined the  
 moods,  
 Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;

Thus much the people know and recognise,  
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel  
not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind  
Than our forerunners, since more composite,  
Look not so great (beside their simple way)  
To a judge who only sees one way at once,  
One mind-point, and no other at a time,—  
Compares the small part of a man of us  
With some whole man of the heroic age,  
Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for  
ours,

And ours is greater, had we skill to know.  
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,  
This sequence of the soul's achievements  
here,

Being, as I find much reason to conceive,  
Intended to be viewed eventually  
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,  
But each part having reference to all,—  
How shall a certain part, pronounced com-  
plete,

Endure effacement by another part?  
Was the thing done?—Then what's to do  
again?

See, in the chequered pavement opposite,  
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,  
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—  
He did not overlay them, superimpose  
The new upon the old and blot it out,  
But laid them on a level in his work,

Making at last a picture ; there it lies.  
So, first the perfect separate forms were  
made,  
The portions of mankind—and after, so,  
Occurred the combination of the same.  
Or where had been a progress, otherwise ?  
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—  
In such a synthesis the labour ends.  
Now, mark me—those divine men of old time  
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one  
point  
The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;  
And where they reached, who can do more  
than reach ?  
It takes but little water just to touch  
At some one point the inside of a sphere,  
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the  
rest  
In due succession : but the finer air  
Which not so palpably nor obviously,  
Though no less universally, can touch  
The whole circumference of that emptied  
sphere,  
Fills it more fully than the water did ;  
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself  
Resolved into a subtler element.  
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full  
Up to the visible height—and after, void ;  
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.  
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to  
Zeus

To vindicate his purpose in its life—  
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?  
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,  
That he or other God, descended here  
And, once for all, showed simultaneously  
What, in its nature, never can be shown  
Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say.  
The worth both absolute and relative  
Of all His children from the birth of time,  
His instruments for all appointed work.  
I now go on to image,—might we hear  
The judgment which should give the due to  
each,  
Show where the labour lay and where the  
ease,  
And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere!  
This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,  
That years and days, the summers and the  
springs  
Follow each other with unwaning powers—  
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer  
far  
Through culture, than the wild wealth of  
the rock ;  
The suave plum than the savage-tasted  
drupe ;  
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;  
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn  
flowers ;  
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy  
slave,

Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,  
 Refines upon the women of my youth.  
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates?  
 I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—  
 Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor  
     carved  
 And painted men like Phildias and his friend :  
 I am not great as they are, point by point :  
 But I have entered into sympathy  
 With these four, running these into one soul,  
 Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.  
 Say, is it nothing that I know them all?  
 The wild flower was the larger—I have  
     dashed  
 Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's  
 Honey with wine, and driven its seed to  
     fruit,  
 And show a better flower if not so large.  
 I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods  
 Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare  
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext  
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,  
 Discourse of lightly or deprecate?  
 It might have fallen to another's hand—what  
     then?  
 I pass too surely—let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask:  
 This being with me as I declare, O king,  
 My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,  
 So done by me, accepted so by men—

Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)  
I must not be accounted to attain  
The very crown and proper end of life.  
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,  
I face death with success in my right hand :  
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself  
The fortunate of men. "For" (writest thou)  
"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave  
nought :

Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,  
The pictures men shall study ; while my life,  
Complete and whole now in its power and joy  
Dies altogether with my brain and arm  
Is lost indeed ; since,—what survives myself?  
The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,  
Set on the promontory which I named.  
And that—some supple courtier of my heir  
Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,  
To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.  
I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go ! "

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole  
mind.

Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse  
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,  
That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?  
That imperfection means perfection hid,  
Reserved in part, to grace the aftertime ?  
If, in the morning of philosophy,  
Ere aught had been recorded, aught per-  
ceived,

Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst  
have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,  
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—  
Thou wouldest have seen them perfect, and  
deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.

Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned  
thee

“Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,  
Do more for visible creatures than is done?”

Thou wouldest have answered, “Ay, by  
making each

Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.

All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the  
rock,

The fish strikes through the sea, the snake  
both swims

And slides; the birds take flight, forth range  
the beasts,

Till life's mechanics can no further go—

And all this joy in natural life is put

Like fire from off Thy finger into each,  
So exquisitely perfect is the same.

But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are;  
It has them, not they it: and so I choose,

For man, Thy last premeditated work  
(If I might add a glory to this scheme)

That a third thing should stand apart from  
both,

A quality arise within the soul,

Which, intro-active, made to supervise  
And feel the force it has, may view itself,  
And so be happy." Man might live at first  
The animal life: but is there nothing more?  
In due time, let him critically learn  
How he lives; and, the more he gets to  
know  
Of his own life's adaptabilities,  
The more joy-giving will his life become.  
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably  
said:  
"Let progress end at once,—man make no  
step  
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,  
Using his senses, not the sense of sense."  
In man there's failure, only since he left  
The lower and unconscious forms of life.  
We called it an advance, the rendering plain  
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,  
And, by new lore so added to the old,  
Take each step higher over the brute's head.  
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,  
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the  
soul,  
Which whole surrounding flats of natural  
life  
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;  
A tower that crowns a country. But, alas!  
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,

For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—  
We know this, which we had not else perceived)  
That there's a world of capability  
For joy, spread round about us, meant  
for us,  
Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,  
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot  
more  
Than ere you climbed the tower to look  
abroad !  
Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has  
brought  
Deduction to it." We struggle—fain to  
enlarge  
Our bounded physical recipiency,  
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,  
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,  
It skills not : life's inadequate to joy,  
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.  
They praise a fountain in my garden here  
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt  
Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.  
What if I told her, it is just a thread  
From that great river which the hills shut up,  
And mock her with my leave to take the  
same ?  
The artificer has given her one small tube  
Past power to widen or exchange—what  
boots

To know she might spout oceans if she could ?

She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread,

And so a man can use but a man's joy  
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,

" See, man, how happy I live, and despair—  
That I may be still happier—for thy use ! "

If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,

As hearts beat on to doing : 'tis not so—  
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness ?

Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—  
And get no answer : and agree in sum,  
O king, with thy profound discouragement,  
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.

Most progress is most failure ! thou sayest well.

The last point now :—thou dost except a case—

Holding joy not impossible to one  
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—  
Who leave behind me living works indeed ;  
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.  
What ? dost thou verily trip upon a word,  
Confound the accurate view of what joy is  
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)

With feeling joy ? confound the knowing how

And showing how to live (my faculty)  
With actually living?—Otherwise  
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?  
Because in my great epos I display  
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise,  
can act—

Is this as though I acted? if I paint,  
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore  
young?

Methinks I'm older than I bowed myself  
The many years of pain that taught me art!  
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove  
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is  
more:

But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something  
too.

You rower with the moulded muscles there  
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.  
I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's an ode.  
I get to sing of love, when grown too gray  
For being beloved: she turns to that young  
man,

The muscles all a-ripple on his back.  
I know the joy of kingship: well—thou art  
king!

“But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,  
To find thee tripping on a mere word) “what  
Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not  
die:

Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,

And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"  
Why, if they live still, let them come and  
take  
Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy  
cup—  
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I  
survive?  
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,—  
In this, that every day my sense of joy  
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
In power and insight) more enlarged, more  
keen;  
While every day my hairs fall more and  
more,  
My hand shakes, and the heavy years  
increase—  
The horror quickening still from year to  
year,  
The consummation coming past escape  
When I shall know most, and yet least  
enjoy—  
When all my works wherein I prove my  
worth,  
Being present still to mock me in men's  
mouths,  
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,  
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,  
The man who loved his life so over much,  
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
I dare at times imagine to my need  
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,

Unlimited in capability  
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,  
 To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.  
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made  
 strait  
 On purpose to make sweet the life at large—  
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call  
 death,  
 We burst there as the worm into the fly,  
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.  
 But no !  
 Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and alas !  
 He must have done so—were it possible !

Live long and happy, and in that thought  
 die,  
 Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the  
 rest,  
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright  
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine  
 To one called Paulus—we have heard his  
 fame  
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—  
 I know not, nor am troubled much to  
 know.  
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,  
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,  
 Hath access to a secret shut from us ?  
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,  
 In stooping to inquire of such an one.  
 As if his answer could impose at all.

He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.  
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars ! certain slaves  
Who touched on this same isle, preached  
him and Christ ;  
And (as I gathered from a bystander)  
Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

## JAMES LEE'S WIFE.

I.—JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE  
WINDOW.

## I.

AH, Love, but a day  
And the world has changed !  
The sun's away,  
And the bird estranged ;  
The wind has dropped,  
And the sky's deranged :  
Summer has stopped.

## II.

Look in my eyes !  
Wilt thou change too ?  
Should I fear surprise ?  
Shall I find aught new  
In the old and dear,  
In the good and true,  
With the changing year ?

## III.

Thou art a man,  
 But I am thy love.  
 For the lake, its swan ;  
 For the dell, its dove ;  
 And for thee—(oh, haste !)  
 Me to bend above,  
 Me, to hold embraced.

## II.—BY THE FIRESIDE.

## I.

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,  
 Oak and pine ?  
 Oh, for the ills half-understood,  
 The dim dead woe  
 Long ago  
 Befallen this bitter coast of France !  
 Well, poor sailors took their chance ;  
 I take mine.

## II.

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot  
 O'er the sea :  
 Do sailors eye the casement—mute,  
 Drenched and stark,  
 From their bark—  
 And envy, gnash their teeth for hate  
 O' the warm safe house and happy freight  
 —Thee and me ?

## III.

God help you, sailors, at your need !  
Spare the curse !  
For some ships, safe in port indeed,  
Rot and rust,  
Run to dust,  
All through worms i' the wood, which crept,  
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept :  
That is worse.

## IV.

Who lived here before us two ?  
Old-world pairs.  
Did a woman ever—would I knew !—  
Watch the man  
With whom began  
Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your  
teeth !)  
When planks start, open hell beneath  
Unawares ?

## III.—IN THE DOORWAY.

## I.

THE swallow has set her six young on the  
rail,  
And looks seaward :  
The water's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale  
To the leeward,—

On the weather-side, black, spotted white  
with the wind.

“Good fortune departs, and disaster’s be-  
hind,”—

Hark, the wind with its wants and its  
infinite wail!

## II.

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltiness,  
has furled

Her five fingers,  
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world

Where there lingers  
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her  
sake :

How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled  
on its stake !

My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks  
curled.

## III.

Yet here are we two ; we have love, house  
enough,

With the field there,  
This house of four rooms, that field red and  
rough,

Though it yield there,  
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a  
bent ;

If a magpie alight now, it seems an event ;  
And they both will be gone at November’s  
.rebuff.

## IV.

But why must cold spread? but wherefore  
 bring change  
 To the spirit,  
 God meant should mate his with an infinite  
 range,  
 And inherit  
 His power to put life in the darkness and  
 cold?  
 Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be  
 bold!  
 Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter  
 estrange!

## IV.—ALONG THE BEACH.

## I.

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,  
 And reason why you are wrong.  
 You wanted my love—is that much true?  
 And so I did love, so I do:  
 What has come of it all along?

## II.

I took you—how could I otherwise?  
 For a world to me, and more;  
 For all, love greatens and glorifies  
 Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,  
 In what was mere earth before.

## III.

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth !  
 Now do I mis-state, mistake ?  
 Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth ?  
 Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,  
 Seal my sense up for your sake ?

## IV.

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love ! not so, indeed !  
 You were just weak earth, I knew :  
 With much in you waste, with many a weed,  
 And plenty of passions run to seed,  
 But a little good grain too.

## V.

And such as you were, I took you for mine :  
 Did not you find me yours,  
 To watch the olive and wait the vine,  
 And wonder when rivers of oil and wine  
 Would flow, as the Book assures ?

## VI.

Well, and if none of these good things came,  
 What did the failure prove ?  
 The man was my whole world, all the same,  
 With his flowers to praise or his weeds to  
 blame,  
 And, either or both, to love.

## VII.

Yet this turns now to a fault—there ! there !  
 That I do love, watch too long,

And wait too well, and weary and wear ;  
 And 'tis all an old story, and my despair  
 Fit subject for some new song :

## VIII.

“ How the light, light love, he has wings  
     to fly  
 “ At suspicion of a bond :  
 “ My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-  
     bye,  
 “ Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,  
 “ And why should you look beyond ? ”

## V.—ON THE CLIFF.

## I.

I LEANED on the turf,  
 I looked at a rock  
 Left dry by the surf ;  
 For the turf, to call it grass were to mock :  
 Dead to the roots, so deep was done  
 The work of the summer sun.

## II.

And the rock lay flat  
 As an anvil's face :  
 No iron like that !  
 Baked dry ; of a weed, of a shell, no trace :  
 Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,  
 Death's altar by the lone shore.

## III.

On the turf, sprang gay  
With his films of blue,  
No cricket, I'll say,  
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned too,  
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,  
Real fairy, with wings all right.

## IV.

On the rock, they scorch  
Like a drop of fire  
From a brandished torch,  
Fall two red fans of a butterfly :  
No turf, no rock : in their ugly stead,  
See, wonderful blue and red !

## V.

Is it not so  
With the minds of men ?  
The level and low,  
The burnt and bare, in themselves ; but then  
With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,—  
Love settling unawares !

## VI.—READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF.

## I.

“STILL ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or  
no?  
“Which needs the other's office, thou or I?

“ Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,  
 “ And can, in truth, my voice untie  
 “ Its links, and let it go ?

## II.

“ Art thou a dumb wronged thing that would  
 be righted,  
 “ Entrusting thus thy cause to me ? For-  
 bear !  
 “ No tongue can mend such pleadings ; faith,  
 requited  
 “ With falsehood,—love, at last aware  
 “ Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

## III.

“ We have them ; but I know not any tone  
 “ So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow :  
 “ Dost think men would go mad without a  
 moan,  
 “ If they knew any way to borrow  
 “ A pathos like thy own ?

## IV.

“ Which sigh wouldest mock, of all the sighs ?  
 The one  
 “ So long escaping from lips starved and  
 blue,  
 “ That lasts while on her pallet-bed the nun  
 “ Stretches her length ; her foot comes  
 through  
 “ The straw she shivers on ;

## V.

“ You had not thought she was so tall : and  
spent,  
“ Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers  
shut  
“ Close, close, their sharp and livid nails  
indent  
“ The clammy palm ; then all is mute :  
“ That way, the spirit went.

## VI.

“ Or wouldest thou rather that I understand  
“ Thy will to help me?—like the dog I  
found  
“ Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,  
“ Who would not take my food, poor  
hound,  
“ But whined and licked my hand.”

## VII.

All this, and more, comes from some young  
man's pride  
Of power to see,—in failure and mistake,  
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side,—  
Merely examples for his sake,  
Helps to his path untried :

## VIII.

Instances he must—simply recognise ?  
Oh, more than so !—must, with a learner's  
zeal,

Make doubly prominent, twice emphasise,  
 By added touches that reveal  
 The god in babe's disguise.

## IX.

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the  
 rest !

Himself the undefeated that shall be :  
 Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to test,—  
 His triumph, in eternity  
 Too plainly manifest !

## X.

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what  
 the wind

Means in its moaning—by the happy  
 prompt

Instinctive way of youth, I mean ; for kind  
 Calm years, exacting their accomp<sup>t</sup>  
 Of pain, mature the mind :

## XI.

And some midsummer morning, at the lull  
 Just about daybreak, as he looks across  
 A sparkling foreign country, wonderful  
 To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,  
 Next minute must annul,—

## XII.

Then, when the wind begins among the vines  
 So low, so low, what shall it say but this ?

"Here is the change beginning, here the  
lines

"Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss  
"The limit time assigns."

## XIII.

Nothing can be as it has been before ;  
Better, so call it, only not the same.  
To draw one beauty into our hearts' core,  
And keep it changeless ! such our claim ;  
So answered,—Never more !

## XIV.

Simple ? Why this is the old woe o' the  
world ;  
Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and  
die.  
Rise with it, then ! Rejoice that man is  
hurled  
From change to change unceasingly,  
His soul's wings never furled !

## XV.

That's a new question ; still replies the fact,  
Nothing endures : the wind moans, saying  
so ;  
We moan in acquiescence : there's life's pact,  
Perhaps probation—do I know ?  
God does : endure his act !

## XVI.

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave  
 On his soul's hands' palms one fair good  
 wise thing  
 Just as he grasped it ! For himself, death's  
 wave ;  
 While time first washes—ah, the sting !—  
 O'er all he'd sink to save.

## VII.—AMONG THE ROCKS.

## I.

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brownold earth,  
 This autumn morning ! How he sets his  
 bones  
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees  
 and feet  
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;  
 Listening the while, where on the heap of  
 stones  
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters  
 sweet.

## II.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true ;  
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and  
 knows.  
 If you loved only what were worth your love,  
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you :  
 Make the low nature better by your throes !  
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain above !

## VIII.—BESIDE THE DRAWING BOARD.

## I.

“ As like as a Hand to another Hand ! ”

Whoever said that foolish thing,  
Could not have studied to understand  
The counsels of God in fashioning,  
Out of the infinite love of his heart,  
This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart  
From the world of wonder left to praise,  
If I tried to learn the other ways  
Of love in its skill, or love in its power.

“ As like as a Hand to another Hand ” :

Who said that, never took his stand,  
Found and followed, like me, an hour,  
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine  
To fear, almost,—of the limit-line !

As I looked at this, and learned and drew,  
Drew and learned, and looked again,

While fast the happy minutes flew,  
Its beauty mounted into my brain,

And a fancy seized me ; I was fain  
To efface my work, begin anew,  
Kiss what before I only drew ;  
Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,  
With soul to help if the mere lips failed,  
I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,  
Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips  
Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

## II.

'Tis a clay cast, the perfect thing,  
From Hand live once, dead long ago :  
Princess-like it wears the ring  
To fancy's eye, by which we know  
That here at length a master found  
His match, a proud lone soul its mate,  
As soaring genius sank to ground,  
And pencil could not emulate  
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine  
To fear almost !—of the limit-line.  
Long ago the god, like me  
The worm, learned, each in our degree :  
Looked and loved, learned and drew,  
Drew and learned and loved again,  
While fast the happy minutes flew,  
Till beauty mounted into his brain  
And on the finger which outvied  
His art he placed the ring that's there,  
Still by fancy's eye descried,  
In token of a marriage rare :  
For him on earth, his art's despair,  
For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

## III.

Little girl with the poor coarse hand  
I turned from to a cold clay cast—  
I have my lesson, understand  
The worth of flesh and blood at last.  
Nothing but beauty in a Hand ?

Because he could not change the hue,  
Mend the lines and make them true  
To this which met his soul's demand,—  
Would Da Vinci turn from you ?  
I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—  
“ The fool forsooth is all forlorn  
“ Because the beauty, she thinks best,  
“ Lived long ago or was never born,—  
“ Because no beauty bears the test  
“ In this rough peasant Hand ! Confessed !  
“ ‘ Art is null and study void ! ’  
“ So sayest thou ? So said not I,  
“ Who threw the faulty pencil by,  
“ And years instead of hours employed,  
“ Learning the veritable use  
“ Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath  
“ Lines and hue of the outer sheath,  
“ If haply I might reproduce  
“ One motive of the powers profuse,  
“ Flesh and bone and nerve that make  
“ The poorest coarsest human hand  
“ An object worthy to be scanned  
“ A whole life long for their sole sake.  
“ Shall earth and the cramped moment-space  
“ Yield the heavenly crowning grace ?  
“ Now the parts and then the whole !  
“ Who art thou, with stinted soul  
“ And stunted body, thus to cry  
“ ‘ I love,—shall that be life's strait dole ?  
“ ‘ I must live beloved or die ! ’

" This peasant hand that spins the wool  
 " And bakes the bread, why lives it on,  
 " Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—  
 " What use survives the beauty?" Foo !

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand !  
 I have my lesson, shall understand.

#### IX.—ON DECK.

##### I.

THERE is nothing to remember in me,  
 Nothing I ever said with a grace,  
 Nothing I did that you care to see,  
 Nothing I was that deserves a place  
 In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

##### II.

Conceded ! In turn, concede to me,  
 Such things have been as a mutual flame.  
 Your soul's locked fast ; but, love for a key,  
 You might let it loose, till I grew the  
 same  
 In your eyes, as in mine you stand : strange  
 plea !

##### III.

For then, then, what would it matter to me  
 That I was the harsh ill-favoured one ?  
 We both should be like as pea and pea ;  
 It was ever so since the world begun :  
 So, let me proceed with my reverie.

## IV.

How strange it were if you had all me,  
As I have all you in my heart and  
brain,  
You, whose least word brought gloom or  
glee,  
Who never lifted the hand in vain—  
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea !

## V.

Strange, if a face, when you thought of me,  
Rose like your own face present now,  
With eyes as dear in their due degree,  
Much such a mouth, and as bright a  
brow,  
Till you saw yourself, while you cried “ ‘Tis  
She ! ”

## VI.

Well, you may; you must, set down to me  
Love that was life, life that was love ;  
A tenure of breath at your lips’ decree,  
A passion to stand as your thoughts  
approve,  
A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

## VII.

But did one touch of such love for me  
Come in a word or a look of yours,

Whose words and looks will, circling, flee  
 Round me and round while life endures,—  
 Could I fancy “As I feel, thus feels he”;

## VIII.

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,  
 And your hair grow these coarse hanks of  
     hair,  
 Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—  
 You might turn myself!—should I know  
     or care  
 When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

## ONE WAY OF LOVE.

## I.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
 Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves.  
 And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
 She will not turn aside? Alas!  
 Let them lie. Suppose they die?  
 The chance was they might take her eye.

## II.

How many a month I strove to suit  
 These stubborn fingers to the lute!  
 To-day I venture all I know.  
 She will not hear my music? So!

Break the string—fold music's wing.  
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing !

## III.

My whole life long I learned to love.  
This hour my utmost art I prove  
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?  
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!  
Lose who may—I still can say,  
Those who win heaven, blest are they.

## ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.

## I.

JUNE was not over,  
Though past the full,  
And the best of her roses  
Had yet to blow,  
When a man I know  
(But shall not discover,  
Since ears are dull,  
And time discloses)

Turned him and said with a man's true air,  
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—  
“If I tire of your June, will she greatly  
care?”

## II.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!  
True, serene deadness  
Tries a man's temper.

What's in the blossom  
 June wears on her bosom?  
 Can it clear scores with you?  
 Sweetness and redness.  
*Eadem semper!*

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!  
 If June mends her bowers now, your hand  
 left unsightly  
 By plucking their roses,—my June will do  
 rightly.

## III.

And after, for pastime,  
 If June be resplendent  
 With flowers in completeness,  
 All petals, no prickles,  
 Delicious as trickles  
 Of wine poured at mass-time,—  
 And choose One indulgent  
 To redness and sweetness:  
 Or if, with experience of man and of  
 spider,  
 She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-  
 ridder,  
 To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will  
 consider.

## MISCONCEPTIONS.

## I.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,  
Making it blossom with pleasure,  
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
Fit for her nest and her treasure.  
Oh, what a hope beyond measure  
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet  
hung to,—  
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to !

## II.

This is a heart the Queen leant on,  
Thrilled in a minute erratic,  
Ere the true bosom she bent on,  
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.  
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic  
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went  
on—  
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent  
on !

## MAY AND DEATH.

## I.

I WISH that when you died last May,  
Charles, there had died along with you  
Three parts of spring's delightful things ;  
'Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

## II.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !

There must be many a pair of friends  
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm  
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

## III.

So, for their sake, be May still May !

Let their new time, as mine of old,  
Do all it did for me : I bid  
Sweet sights and sounds throng manifold.

## IV.

Only, one little sight, one plant,

Woods have in May, that starts up green  
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,  
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves between,—

## V.

That, they might spare ; a certain wood

Might miss the plant ; their loss were  
small :

But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,  
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

## PROSPICE.

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
The mist in my face,  
When the snows begin, and the blasts  
denote  
    I am nearing the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the  
storm,  
    The post of the foe;  
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible  
form,  
    Yet the strong man must go:  
For the journey is done and the summit  
attained,  
    And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon  
be gained,  
    The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
    The best and the last!  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes  
and forbore,  
    And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like  
my peers  
    The heroes of old,  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's  
arrears  
    Of pain, darkness and cold.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the  
brave,

The black minute's at end,  
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that  
rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become first a peace out  
of pain,

Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee  
again,

And with God be the rest !

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